



Department of Teaching, Learning & Leading
TLL 1521/2521 Proactive Strategies for a Positive Classroom
Spring 2025

Instructor: Johanna Higgins, PhD, BCBA-D Assistant Professor of Practice Department of Teaching Learning & Leading University of Pittsburgh Email: jhiggins@pitt.edu	Day/Time: Tues 6:00 – 8:30 PM Location: Wesley W. Posvar Hall Room 5200 Office hours: by appointment Preferred method of communication: email Phone:
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School of Education Mission

We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. **We teach.** We commit to learner, family, and community success. **We commit to educational equity.** We advocate. We work for justice. **We cultivate relationships.** We forge engaged partnerships. **We collaborate.** We learn with and from communities. **We innovate and agitate.** We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. **We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures.** We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. **We shape practice and policy.** We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. **We lead with integrity.** We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Course Description

This course focuses on developing a positive classroom environment through the proactive implementation of behavioral and instructional strategies grounded in evidence-based practices. The central themes include the development of rapport with learners, designing supportive and appropriately leveled instruction, and utilization of assessment-based interventions to address behaviors that are potential barriers to learners' skill acquisition and engagement in instruction. Additionally, this course provides content on goal setting, assessment, and measurement related to special education settings. Evidence-based approaches and practices required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act will be emphasized.

Course Objectives

As a result of active participation and successful completion of requirements, learners will:

1. Identify and synthesize legal, procedural, and ethical requirements for educating and disciplining learners with emotional and behavior disorders, including collaboration with families and external organizations.
2. Demonstrate skills in completing Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and developing Positive Behavior Support Plans (BIP) that integrate academic, social-emotional, and behavioral strategies using data-based decision-making.

3. Identify, select, and apply evidence-based instructional strategies to support learning, encourage cooperation, and manage challenging behaviors in learners with disabilities.
4. Design and modify instructional settings to promote learning, social engagement, self-determination, and age-appropriate behavior for learners with emotional and behavior disorders.
5. Practice collaborating with educators, and mental health professionals to gather diagnostic and treatment insights and implement strategies to prevent or mitigate disruptive, aggressive, and self-stimulatory behaviors.

Important Course Information

Meetings

- **General classes** are held 1/8 – 4/30 in person weekly on Tuesdays from 6:00 – 8:30 pm in Posvar Hall Room 5200 with a few exceptions noted on the course outline.

Communication

The instructor will use Canvas (Learning Management System; LMS) announcements to communicate most frequently with learners.

- Tutorial on signing up for announcements: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/doc-10624>.
- Please communicate with the instructor through Canvas or via email at jhiggins@pitt.edu.

Office hours

Learners may schedule an individual meeting anytime by emailing the instructor at jhiggins@pitt.edu. The instructor is available to meet in person at her office in Oakland or via Zoom web conference.

Textbooks

Learners in this course will read chapters from the following books (available on Canvas):

Downing, J. A. (2007). *Learners with emotional and behavioral problems. Assessment, management, and intervention strategies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

ISBN: 0-13-039476-9

Articles and Selected Readings (provided on CANVAS: Other Readings TBD):

Bradley, R., Doolittle, J., & Bartolotta, R. (2008). Building on the data and adding to the discussion: The experiences and outcomes of learners with emotional disturbance. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 17*, 4-23.

Friend, M. & Bursuck, W. D. (2006) *Including learners with special needs (4th ed.)*. Boston: Pearson.

Kostewicz, D. E., Ruhl, K. L., & Kubina, R. M. (2008). Creating classroom rules for learners with emotional and behavioral disorders: A decision making guide. *Beyond Behavior, 17*, 14-21.

Lane, K. L., & Beebe-Frankenberger, M. (2007). *School-based Interventions: The tools you need to succeed*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Latham, G. (1994). *The power of positive parenting*. North Logan, UT: P&T ink.

Latham, G. (1998). *Keys to classroom management*. North Logan, UT: P&T ink.

Pierce, C. D., Reid, R., & Epstein, M. H. (2004). Teacher-mediated interventions for children with EBD and their academic outcomes: A review. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*, 175-188.

Sidman, M. (1989). *Coercion and its fallout*. Boston: Authors Cooperative Inc.

Skiba, R. J. (2002). Special education and school discipline: A precarious balance. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*, 81-97.

Stokes, T. F., & Baer, D. M. (1977). An implicit technology of generalization. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 10, 349-367.

Zigmond, N. (2006). Twenty-four months after high school: Paths taken by youth diagnosed with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 14, 99-107.

Participation expectations

Learning is a social process. You are expected to attend class, log on to Canvas and work through the modules weekly, be an active participant with guests, and collaborate with other learners. In the event of prolonged absences in which you do not participate in the prior (due to sickness or family emergency), you should contact me via email (jhiggins@pitt.edu). Extreme emergencies will be handled on an individual basis.

Due dates

Most assignments are due on **Tuesday immediately before class**. Need an extension? Just ask. **Your instructor is happy to provide one!**

Assignment submissions in Canvas

Important! Please put your name on all assignments and when appropriate, save your file with last name followed by the assignment title (e.g., **Higgins_reflection**).

Confidentiality

You are responsible to maintain the confidentiality of all the learners you work with in field placements related to your coursework at the University of Pittsburgh. When writing or completing assignments for courses or speaking about your field experience and the learners you work with, use **pseudonyms** (not initials) for learner, teacher, and school names. In public, it is your responsibility to keep written assignments and any other materials bearing the names of learners, teachers, or staff secure from the view of others.

Feedback

For most assignments, the instructor provides group-level summary for the entire class and/or individual feedback rubrics. The instructor analyzes highlights, patterns of strengths, points of improvements and posted as an announcement. Individual written feedback can be requested by a learner at any time.

Late assignments or request for extension

Request for late assignments must be cleared ahead of time and for good reason as judged by the instructor. Given instructor permission in advance of due dates, assignments will be accepted within two weeks of due date.

Graded Activities and Assignments

	Learning Strategy	Point Breakdown	Total Points	% Grade
Class Participation (10) <i>Learners receive points for attending and participating in 10 class discussions/activities. Learners can miss two classes during the semester and still obtain the total points.</i>	Introduction Illustrate Practice Model	10x5 points	50	36%
Case Study Functional Behavior Assessment Summary <i>Learners write a summary of a functional behavior assessment.</i>	Mastery	35	35	25%
FBA/BIP Case Study Outline <i>Learners write an outline based on case study information for a behavior intervention plan.</i>	Mastery	15	15	11%
FBA/BIP Case Study Presentations <i>Learners write a complete plan based on case study information and present to the class.</i>	Mastery	20	20	14%
FBA/BIP Case Study Peer Review <i>Learners review to peer groups to identify similarities/differences.</i>	Feedback	2x10 points	20	14%
		Total	140	100%

Grades

To receive a course letter grade of A-C, all required assignments, projects, and course materials must be completed. The instructor can consider an incomplete only if a substantial portion (50% or more) of the class assignments is completed with a satisfactory grade (A-B) at the time of request. In all other circumstances, learners should plan to withdraw from the course.

Percentage (%)	Letter Grade
94 - 100	A
90 - 93	A-
87 - 89	B+
83 - 86	B
80 - 82	B-
74 - 79	C
69 - 73	D

Technology Requirements

Learners will need the following technology to participate fully in this course.

- Active Pitt email address (if you forward your mail make sure to check regularly)
- Access to Canvas LMS (Learning Management System)
- Internet connection (preferably high -speed broadband wired or wireless)
- Supported Web browser (Google Chrome is strongly recommended)
- Word processor (such as Microsoft Word)
- Adobe Reader (to view PDF files)

Note: The instructor recognizes that not all learners may have access to the technology listed above. Please reach out to the instructor to discuss accommodations if needed.

Tech Support

Contact Pitt IT for technical assistance by submitting a ticket to the helpdesk. Learners may also contact 412-624-HELP (437) or email helpdesk@pitt.edu.

Course, School, and University Policies

Online Conduct

Appropriate online academic conduct means maintaining a safe learning environment based on mutual respect and civility. All participants in Pitt online courses are expected to behave professionally by adhering to these standards of conduct: Never transmit or promote content known to be illegal. Respect other people's privacy as well as your own. Forgive other people's mistakes. Never use harassing, threatening, embarrassing, or abusive language or actions. Online communication that fails to meet these standards of conduct will be removed from the course. Repeated misconduct may result in being blocked from online discussions, receiving a grade penalty, or being dismissed from the course. Such misconduct online may be reported to officials for action in accordance with University policy. If you ever encounter inappropriate content in our course, please contact your instructor with your concerns.

Academic Integrity

Learners in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any learner suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy.

Disability Services

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other modifications, you need to notify the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located in 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

TLL Departmental Grievance Procedures

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and learners in their relationships with each other. When a learner in TLL believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the learner should follow this procedure:

1. The learner should talk directly to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the learner should talk to the relevant program coordinator.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the learner should talk to the associate chair of TLL.
4. If needed, the learner should next talk to the SOE associate dean of learners.
5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the learner should file a written statement of charges with the dean's designated Academic Integrity Administrative.

Civility Commitment

As future or current teachers, we will operate from a standpoint that everyone believes that all learners deserve a quality education in a safe setting. The same can be said for university learning. A university classroom is, by definition, space where a free exchange of ideas must happen, but where consideration for others, their views, and their life experiences is also paramount. When you are uncomfortable with an idea, it is your right to speak up about that. As we learn with and about people with very different life experiences and beliefs from our own, it is imperative that we respect these perspectives and use respectful language in discussing challenging ideas. Carefully consider your language choices to ensure that all learners feel safe and valued. If at any time you are uncomfortable please feel free to speak out and/or speak to me privately.

Sexual Harassment

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to the maintenance of a community free from all forms of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment violates University policy as well as state, federal, and local laws. It is neither permitted nor condoned. It is also a violation of the University of Pittsburgh's policy against sexual harassment for any employee or learner at the University of Pittsburgh to attempt in any way to retaliate against a person who makes a claim of sexual harassment. Any individual who, after thorough investigation and an informal or formal hearing, is found to have violated the University's policy against sexual harassment, will be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension, termination, or expulsion. Any disciplinary action taken will depend upon the severity of the offense. For more information, see the Web site: <https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-20-sexual-misconduct-formerly-06-05-01>

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Names and Pronouns

I will gladly honor your request to address you by your name and pronoun (that may differ from the school records). I will gather this information from you in the introduction survey.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, learners may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the learner's own private use.

Copyright Statement

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials. See Library of Congress Copyright Office and the University Copyright Policy.

G-grades

If unforeseen events (such as major illness) prevent a learner from timely completion of course work, he/she may request a meeting with the instructor to discuss the possibility of earning a “G” grade for the term. If both learner and instructor agree to the “G” grade, they collaboratively write a document that describes, in detail, what the learner needs to do to complete the required course work and the time frame (not to exceed one academic year) within which he/she must do so. Upon receiving all work, the course instructor would evaluate the work and send forward to the Associate Dean a request for the permanent grade.

Food/Housing Insecurity

Many learners, both undergraduate and graduate, experience housing and/or food insecurity that can impact their academic work and general health. Please know there are resources available to you that are confidential. Of course, you are welcome to speak with me if you need support in contacting the right people/offices. You may also consider exploring the Pitt Pantry or Off-Campus Housing Office.

TLL 1521/2521 Course Schedule

*This is a living document and may change throughout the semester.
Please sign up for announcements on Canvas to be aware of all class changes.*

<u>Session</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignments Due or completed during class</u>	<u>Competencies Addressed</u>
<i>Session 1 1/14/25</i>	Introduction to the course & review of syllabus	Downing: Chap. 1, 2 <u>Optional Readings:</u> Skiba Katsiyannis & Maag		I.A.2., IV.B., III.A,
<i>Session 2 1/21/25</i>	Discipline/Punishment In Special Education, School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) & Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)	Lane Reading 3 Downing: Chapter 4 Visit PBIS.org - Review Tier 1, 2, & 3 strategies, etc.	Group Activity	I.C.8., III.J., IV.B., I.C.8., III.J., IV.B.,
<i>Session 3 1/28/25</i>	No Class Complete Study Guides for Readings		Group Activity	I.C.8., III.J., IV.B., IV.E.,
<i>Session 4 2/4/25</i>	Teacher-Student Interactions (Avoid Coercion & Stay Close)	Sidman & Latham readings		
	Teacher-Student Interactions (Give Positives & Pivot)	Downing Chap. 5		I.C.8., III.J., IV.B., IV.E.,
<i>Session 5 2/11/25</i>	Group Interventions Token Economies, Good Behavior Game, Contingency Contracts	Kostewicz Article		
<i>Session 6 2/18/25</i>	Effective Instructional Practices	Archer Chapter 1 Stokes & Baer	Group Activity	
<i>Session 7 2/25/25</i>	Antecedent Interventions	Robertson & Coy (2019), Coy (2018)		
<i>3/4/25</i>	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK		
<i>Session 8 3/11/25</i>	FBA/BIP Part I: Identification and Assessment of Behaviors via FBAs & FAs	Downing: Chap. 3 Lane Reading 1	Case Study Small Group Activity	III.F., III.J., IV.B., VII. D.,
<i>Session 9 3/18/25</i>	FBA/BIP Part II: Information Gathering, Analysis & Summarizing	TBD	Case Study Small Group Activity	III.F., III.J., IV.B., VII.D.,

Session 10 3/25/25	Independent Group Work [No Meeting]	None	FBA Summary	
Session 11 4/1/25	Case Study Workshop	None		III.F., III.J., IV.B., VII.D.,
Session 12 4/8/25	FBA/ BIP Part III: Positive Behavior Support Plans (BIP); Intervention Selection & Plan Monitoring	Lane Reading 2 Friend & Bursick	Case Study Outline Due	I.A.2., III.F., III.J., IV.B., IV.E., VII.D.
Session 13 4/15/25	Collaboration, Training and Feedback: Coaching	Downing: Chap 12 and 13	Case Study Plan Due	
Session 14 4/22/25	Case Study Presentations & Peer Reviews		FBA/BIP Presentation (Submit via Canvas before class) FBA/BIP Peer Reviews (Complete in class; submit Feedback Form via Canvas)	

No Final Exam