Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
CG-EDUC-503: Families, School and Community
Andrea R. Katzman
Fall 2014-15
September 8 – December 19 2014

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Office Hours:
Flexible. Due to the nature of our course, I do not have set office hours. However, I welcome dialogue and encourage you to contact me with any questions, concerns and/or further requests for information and support. If you would like to Skype or speak on the phone with me, please email me first so that we might set up a time to connect. Mid-semester, each student will have a scheduled conversation with the instructor.

Course Scheduling: Each week of coursework will begin on Tuesday at 12:00am (midnight) EST and conclude Monday at 9:00pm EST (with exceptions for holidays). Sessions may be opened prior to the date of study, although you will not be required to do the coursework until the listed date.

Course Description:
This course is designed to acquaint teachers with the theories, knowledge, skills, and practices of relationship building among families, schools, and communities. In this course, we will consider conceptual frameworks in which the unique relationships between families, communities, and schools can be understood. These frameworks will help us to define the multitude of factors that impact the partnerships between families, schools, and communities, including cultural backgrounds and values, societal forces, and differing role expectations of parents and teachers. These understandings, as well as our own reflections and experiences, will serve as a basis from which our own practice concerning families, schools, and communities will develop.

Expected Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:
- Identify the benefits and challenges of school, family, and community relationship-building.
- Describe differing conceptions of childhood and parenting.
- Distinguish the theories that describe the unique characteristics of families (with attention paid to the impact of culture, social background, communication styles, religious observance, and values on children, families, and teachers).
- Demonstrate an understanding of collaboration and become familiar with effective communication skills and strategies that help to foster collaborative relationships.
- Relate theories to practice in one’s own and others’ educational settings.
- Discover ways to develop partnerships with families and communities.

Required Texts & Resources:
All the readings for the course will be available on-line or will be posted on Schoology.

Assessment:
The aims of the following assessments are to provide ongoing feedback in which to gauge students’ understanding, depth of learning, and level of contribution. In addition, the coursework will provide opportunities to further develop
communication and critical thinking skills, as well as to reinforce the practice of reflection in the learning process and in our roles as educators.

Assignments will include:
- Weekly readings and materials
- Discussion Board Posts (40% of grade)
- Two personal Reflection Essays (20% of grade)
- Discussion Leader (20% of grade)
- Final Reflection Paper (20% of grade)

Course Accommodations for Disabilities:
*Hebrew College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in programs. Accordingly, if a student has a documented disability, and as a result, needs a reasonable accommodation to attend, participate or complete course requirements, then he or she should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. For further information, see the Student Handbook at [http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf](http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf).*

If you require course accommodations because of a documented disability or an emergency medical condition, please email your instructor as soon as possible. We are happy to work with you on any issues you have to ensure that you can participate fully in the class and complete the course requirements. Please do not wait until the assignments are due for a retroactive accommodation, but discuss the situation with your instructor before you experience difficulty.

**Course Structure:**

**Unit 1 (09/09-09/15)– Seeking First to Understand, Then to Be Understood**
During this unit, we will meet each other and have an opportunity to clarify any questions we might have about the goals and expectations of this class. We will also address the importance of empathy in relationship-building and consider the value and impact of judging others favorably as we prepare for collaboration with families and communities.

**Videos & Readings:**
1. Pierson, R. F. Every Kid Needs A Champion: [http://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion#t-111850](http://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion#t-111850), 7.48min

**Unit 2 – (09/16-09/22) Introduction to Our Topic**
The readings from this week offer a partial introduction to our course topic. The Pew Survey provides an overview of the changing landscape of Jewish identity in America. Excerpts from Grishaver & Wolfson’s book highlight the importance of family engagement in Jewish educational settings. The Clark and Aguilar articles identify some of the challenges inherent in family-school relationship building. Finally, the NAEYC position paper outlines some of the ethical guidelines necessary for effective family-school collaboration. Together, these texts provide us with both important background information about our topic and a context in which to place our learning this semester.

**Videos & Readings:**
5. NAEYC. (2005). Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment: A Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, pp. 1, 3-4
**Unit 3 – (09/23-10/20) Vulnerability and Parenting**

In order for schools to create effective partnerships, educators must ensure that families are comfortable sharing their experiences about their parenting, as well as recognize the impact of culture on child-rearing choices. This week’s readings address these issues. Brown asserts that parenting is a “shame minefield” with parents often feeling (and being) judged and that it is one of the most vulnerable endeavors in which human being engage. She writes, “You can’t claim to care about the welfare of children if you’re shaming other parents for the choices they’re making.” In her book, Small describes the ways in which biology and culture shape our expectations of our children and of our parenting styles/choices – often in ways that are not immediately transparent to us. She provides a unique perspective to the study of childhood by considering both cultural and biological aspects of raising children.

**Videos & Readings:**

*Personal Reflection Paper #1 (2-3 pgs.) due 09/20*

**Unit 4 – (10/21-10/27) Introduction to Collaboration and Communication**

Effective communication and clearly expressed expectations are essential to building strong school-family-community partnerships. It is often assumed that since we all spend so much of our lives communicating and working with others, we know how to do so successfully. Yet, studies show that there are often gaps in our knowledge and execution; instead, researchers insist that these skills must be explicitly defined, studied, and practiced. In this unit, collaboration and communication are described for us, effective strategies are outlined, and potential complications are discussed.

**Videos and Readings:**

**Unit 5 – (10/28-11/03) The Ecology of the Family: Challenges and Potentials**

During this unit, we will examine the different ways children might be seen in relationship to their families and schools. Currently we recognize that children are best understood and serviced by educators through a family-centered context. The theories we read will provide a framework for deepening our understanding of family behavior, thought, and development. In addition, they will suggest a basis for our future learning, research, and experiences.

**Readings:**
3. Review: Power Point on Chapter 11 & *The Ecology of the Family*

*Personal Reflection Paper #2 (3-4 pgs.) due 11/03*

**Unit 6 – (11/04-11/10) Building Relationships and Trust**

During this unit, we will build upon our understandings of effective communication strategies and theories of families by examining the different ways in which educators can build trust, encourage productive encounters, and identify points of connection and difficulty with families. During this week, you will have an opportunity to study specific case-studies and produce different strategies for meaningful collaboration.

**Videos and Readings:**
2. *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs*:

**Unit 7 – (11/11-11/17) Caring for the Children We Share**
Discussion Leaders will provide the introduction and framing to this unit.

**Readings & Videos:**
2. Read the sources provided by the Discussion Leaders.

**Assignments:**
1. Respond to the questions on the Discussion Board posted by the Discussion Leaders. For more information about the Discussion Leaders, see “Assignments.”

**Unit 8: (11/18-11/24) A Theoretical Approach for Teachers**
Discussion Leaders will provide the introduction and framing to this unit.

**Readings:**
   http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/pubs/katzsym/keyes.pdf
2. Read the sources provided by the Discussion Leaders.

**Assignments:**
1. Respond to the questions on the Discussion Board posted by the Discussion Leaders.

**Unit 9: (11/25-12/8) Different Dimensions of Parent-Community Involvement**
Discussion Leaders will provide the introduction and framing to this unit.

**Readings:**
2. Read the sources provided by the Discussion Leaders.

**Assignments:**
1. Respond to the questions on the Discussion Board posted by the Discussion Leaders.

**Unit 10: (12/9-12-15) Wrap-Up and Reflections**
During this week we will have an opportunity to reflect upon our learning from this semester, begin to envision our future practice working with families and communities, and continue to work on the Final Paper (due 12/15).

*Final Reflection Paper (5-10 pgs.) due 12/15*