



## **The Gifts of Autism**

### **EDUO 9409 One Unit, 15 hours**

Instructor – Ryan Pickett

Welcome to **EDUO 9409 The Gifts of Autism**. This class was created as part of a six course series entitled **Strength-Based Teaching and Learning**. The other five courses in the series are:

- **EDUO 9406 Neurodiversity in the Classroom**
- **EDUO 9407 The Talents of the Learning Disabled**
- **EDUO 9408 The Joys of ADHD**
- **EDUO 9410 The Strengths of Intellectually Disabled Students**
- **EDUO 9411 The Bright side of Emotional and Behavior Disorders**

Just as we celebrate diversity in nature and cultures, so too do we need to honor the diversity of students who learn, think, and behave differently. This series is designed to help teachers and schools embrace the strengths of such neurodiverse students in order to help them thrive in school and beyond. The content learned in the class, **The Gifts of Autism**, will afford you the knowledge necessary to emphasize the strengths of the Autistic students in your classroom while continuing to provide support and encouragement in the needed areas. By meeting the requirements of this class, participating teachers will earn one semester unit of graduate level extension credit from Dominican University of California, a fully accredited university.

Although Neurodiversity in the classroom is **NOT** a prerequisite for the other five courses, it does provide a foundation for them. All six classes in the Strength-Based Teaching and Learning series require one book entitled Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Succeed in School and Life by Thomas Armstrong. This book is available for purchase at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

## Course Objectives

After completing the course, *The Gifts of Autism*, you will demonstrate or indicate:

1. Knowledge about Autism.
2. Knowledge of the concepts neurodiversity and positive niche construction.
3. Awareness of your current approach to teaching Autistic students in your classroom.
4. How to create a strength-based curriculum that helps your Autistic students become more successful at school and life.

## Grading Rubric

Exemplary: A+ to A-	Acceptable: B+ to B-	Unacceptable:
Reflective, thoughtful ideas relevant to the assignment are clearly stated	Presents some relevant ideas and connections to the assignment	Ideas are not clear or relevant
Very well organized	Generally well organized	Shows little or no organization
Responses relate numerous facts and specific details of the program materials	Some facts and specific details of the program materials are included	Few or no facts or specific details of the program materials are included
Free of spelling and/or grammatical errors	Writing contains a few spelling and/or grammatical errors	Numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors make the writing difficult to read

## ASSIGNMENTS

After reading the Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 4, and Chapter 7 of the book, Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Succeed in School and Life complete assignments 1-5. Place each assignment **1-5** on a separate page, clearly labeled with assignment number and name.

### 1. Autism

a. Use the resources below to learn about Autism. From the links below, you will learn about Autism by reading articles and watching videos. It should take you at least two hours to review this information.

- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism>
- [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail\\_autism.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail_autism.htm)

- <http://www.ncl.org/types-learning-disabilities/adhd-related-issues/autism-spectrum-disorders>
- <http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/teaching-students-autism-about-their-learning-strengths-and-weaknesses-22983332>
- <http://www.ncl.org/learning-disability-resources/videos/video-strengths-students-ld-other-disorders>

b. After reading the assigned chapters in the textbook and studying the above resources, what two things did you learn about Autism that you did not already know?

c. Which one of these resources would you recommend to a colleague? Why?

## 2. Case Study

Think of one autistic student that you have worked with at your school. Describe how autism affects this student. In your description, be sure to include the student's strengths and weaknesses as well as how he or she is supported at your school. You may need to acquire some of this information from the student's special education or 504 case carrier.

## 3. Positive Niche Construction Comparison

Chapter 1 of your textbook outlines seven elements of positive niche construction. Describe your case study student's experience at school with respect to all seven components of positive niche construction (Strength Awareness, Positive Role Models, Assistive Technologies/UDL, Enhanced Human Resources, Strength-Based Learning Strategies, Affirmative Career Aspirations, and Environmental Modification). In your description, indicate whether the student's experience is a positive or poor niche construction and explain why.

## 4. Universal Design for Learning

Chapter 1 of your text references Universal Design for Learning and The Center for Applied Special Technology as a resource for helping our neurodiverse students achieve success on the Common Core State Standards. Study each of the aforementioned organizations websites, <http://www.udlcenter.org> and <http://www.cast.org>. After studying these websites, list at least one methodology or strategy that you feel will improve the niche construction of the student you described in assignment 3. Explain how you will utilize the strategy and why you feel it will help this student.

## 5. Common Core State Standards

Utilizing positive niche construction, pick one standard you are responsible for teaching and create a plan for teaching this standard to the student in the case study assignment. Chapter 4 of your textbook provides an example of how to do this for autistic students. In Chapter 7, you read how William H. Henderson Inclusion Elementary School became a strength-based school through positive niche construction. These chapters are great resources for completing this assignment.

## Submit Coursework

Course assignments must be placed in the appropriate **Assignments Drop Box** found in the course.