

## Supporting Special Needs through Strategic Grouping

Course Syllabus

Estimated Clock Hours: 15

**Course Authors and Instructors:** This course is co-authored and instructed by Olivia Medina, an educator of students with mild to moderate learning needs and a community college professor, in the area of child development, specifically in the use of strategies needed to assist student with disabilities. It is also authored and taught by Ruth Wise, who has extensive experience teaching students of diverse needs in general education and special education classrooms, from severe learning needs to highly gifted learning needs.

**Course Objective & Learning Goals:** This course targets meeting the needs of diverse learners in general and special education classrooms, particularly through strategic grouping. In order to group students most effectively, even in order to successfully teach students, it is imperative that teachers conscientiously get to know each student as thoroughly and accurately as possible. Often students' strengths go unrecognized, and many needs go unnoticed, frustrating the teaching and learning process. When strengths are celebrated and deep needs are validated in students, their best efforts, abilities and character can be evoked. The course provides an overview of federal laws and regulations related to meeting the needs of students, as well as various needs that require the accommodation of teacher. Strategies are listed, but the course emphasizes the component of arranging groups to meet students' needs and to bring out their strengths, examining specific grouping options for particular dynamics and learning results. The course ends with an argument for maximized inclusion for students, as well as Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's model of portraiture in the field of education, to find ways of discovering, defining, and bringing out the goodness that is present in every student. Current research studies, videos of experts, and sample in-classroom scenarios are delivered. Each lesson ends with reflective responses that apply directly to teaching, discussed through forums, so that the educators can collaborate and co-construct knowledge and insights from both course content and their diverse perspectives and experiences.

### Course Outline:

- Session 1: Introduction to Course – Getting to Know Students' Strengths and Needs, and How Both Can Be Assets to Others
- Session 2: Strategies for Meeting Diverse Learning Needs, with Emphasis on Strategic Grouping
- Session 3: Varied Grouping Approaches for Various Purposes (How to group)
- Session 4: Classroom Management for Effective Grouping
- Session 5: The Portraiture Model of Education
- Final Project – Presentation of Learning