



Approved Innovative Course

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Course: Making Connections III

PEIMS Code: N1290334

Abbreviation: MAKECON3

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Number of Credits: 0.5

Course description:

The Making Connections course sequence serves students who have an autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder which causes them to have difficulty with social skills. The courses also assist the students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and in turn increases that student's postsecondary outcome.

Making Connections III assists students in understanding how their specific disability impacts their learning style. Students learn to employ the proper accommodations and modifications to be more successful. Additionally, they develop the skill to effectively self-advocate for the accommodations and modifications they require.

Essential knowledge and skills:

- (a) **General requirements.** Students shall be awarded one-half credit for successful completion of the course. The Making Connections courses do not have to be taken in a sequential manner, however it is recommended.
- (b) **Introduction.** The Making Connections courses serve students who have an autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder, such social (pragmatic) communication disorder, which causes them to have difficulty with social skills. These courses assist the students in developing and understanding autism spectrum disorder and other related disorders. The courses also assist students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills, which may lead to increased postsecondary outcomes.

Making Connections III assists students in understanding how their specific disability impacts their learning style. Students learn to employ the proper accommodations and modifications to be more successful. Additionally, they develop skills to effectively self-advocate for the accommodations and modifications they require.

- (c) **Knowledge and Skills**



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- (1) Disability Awareness. The student develops an understanding of autism and specific implications concerning an individual's learning style. The student is expected to:
 - (A) identify and describe the common relative strengths and weaknesses consistent to those on the autism spectrum;
 - (B) use various resources to research the typical learning styles of individuals on the spectrum; and
 - (C) compare various effective interventions for individuals on the spectrum.
- (2) Personal Growth and Awareness. The student analyzes the learning style and study skills, and accommodations that would most benefit the student. The student is expected to:
 - (A) analyze study skill preferences by completing a learning inventory;
 - (B) identify the student's preferred learning style;
 - (C) compare learning strategies such as typing notes or listening to audio lectures and discuss how the strategies align with the student's preferred learning style; and
 - (D) identify the strategies including accommodations that will be most effective in each of the student's classes.
- (3) Social Awareness. The student demonstrates self-advocacy skills in roleplay scenarios and in authentic situations. The student is expected to:
 - (A) compare advocacy and self-advocacy;
 - (B) discuss the benefits of becoming an effective self-advocate;
 - (C) discuss, observe, and roleplay the steps of effective self-advocacy;
 - (D) demonstrate appropriate and effective self-advocacy in real situations;
 - (E) evaluate the student's effectiveness in self-advocacy; and
 - (F) develop a plan for improvement in future situations requiring self-advocacy such as developing a list of the available support systems to access in various scenarios or environments or developing a task analysis to effectively communicate frustration.
- (4) Personal Growth and Awareness. The student explains the purpose and goals of the Admission Review and Dismissal Committee (ARD-C). The student is expected to:



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- (A) identify the essential components of the student's IEP such as academic goals, behavior intervention plan, behavior and social skills goals, autism supplement, and transition plan;
 - (B) demonstrate the ability to discuss the student's disability, including identifying strengths, acknowledging needs, and participating in the development of plans to address those needs; and
 - (C) evaluate each accommodation and modification to determine the student's need for that service based on its effectiveness and appropriateness; and
 - (D) communicate effectively and respectfully the student's needs and rights according to law and the student's IEP.
- (5) Self-Advocacy. The student advocates for appropriate accommodations and modifications in the classroom. The student is expected to:
- (A) discuss various self-advocacy strategies;
 - (B) employ self-advocacy strategies to ensure all needed and agreed upon accommodations and modifications are available;
 - (C) roleplay respectful approaches in informing teachers of the appropriate accommodations or modifications the student receives; and
 - (D) review and articulate disability rights for Texas students with disabilities.
- (6) Social Awareness in the Community. The student explains that accommodations and modifications needed in the educational setting may also be needed in other community settings. The student is expected to:
- (A) compare the student's needs in community settings to the student's needs in the educational setting;
 - (B) identify how accommodations provided to the student at school can be used to mitigate demands in other settings;
 - (C) roleplay the use of accommodations and modifications in various community settings;
 - (D) practice the use of accommodations and modifications in community settings; and
 - (E) analyze the effectiveness of accommodations and modifications and make necessary changes.
- (7) Future Planning. The student discusses transition goals and adjusts goals based on various feedback. The student is expected to:



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- (A) identify the student's graduation plan;
- (B) identify all credits and assessments needed for graduation;
- (C) develop a plan for the completion of required courses;
- (D) discuss the importance of having a state identification card and develop a plan to obtain one;
- (E) discuss the components of an effective resume such as work experience, volunteer work, involvement in school organizations, and mastery of marketable skills;
- (F) practice completing a job application and developing a resume;
- (G) discuss, observe, and roleplay socially appropriate and marketable behaviors to demonstrate in an interview such as appropriate dress for various interviews, promptness, eye contact, and answering questions regarding marketable strengths and weaknesses;
- (H) practice skills in real-world situations and analyze how the interactions were successful and/or unsuccessful; and
- (I) develop a plan for how the student will engage in real-world situations in the future.

Description of specific student needs this course is designed to meet:

The Making Connections courses are designed to meet the needs of students with autism spectrum disorder or other related disorders such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder, that may cause deficits in the individual's social skills. These social skill deficits are identified within the students' Functional Behavior Assessment. Despite many students on the spectrum having average to above average intelligence, research has shown that students on the autism spectrum are less successful in their postsecondary endeavors than students with intellectual disabilities in obtaining and maintaining a job (Shattuck et al., 2012). Research has also illustrated individuals with an autism spectrum disorder as having difficulty achieving postsecondary success due to their deficits in social skills (Hendricks, 2010). Students in this course require direct social skills instruction as well as assistance generalizing those skills across multiple settings. This course will increase students' postsecondary outcomes..

Major resources and materials:

"Autism Society of America: About Autism." Autism Society of America: What Is Autism. *Autism Society of America, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.*



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Autism Society of America: Living with Autism. Autism Society of America: What Is Autism. Autism Society of America, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

"Disability Rights Texas." Disability Rights Texas - Advancing the Rights of Texans with Disabilities. N.p., 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

Career Interest and Aptitude Assessment

Functional Behavior Assessment (multiple sources)

Individualized Education Program

Buron, K.D. (2012). *The incredible 5-pointing scale; The significantly improved and expanded, (2nd.ed.) second edition.* Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC Publishing

Gerhardt, P.F., & Crimmins, D. (2013). *Social skills and adaptive behavior in learners with autism spectrum disorder.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H . Brooks

Laugeson, E.A. (2013). *The science of making friends: Helping socially challenged teens and young adults.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laugeson, E.A. (2014). *The peers curriculum for school-based professional: Social Skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder.* New York, NY: Routledge

Laugeson, E.A., & Frankel, F. (2010). *Social skills for teenagers with developmental and autism spectrum disorders: The peers treatment manual.* New York, NY: Routledge

Luiselli, J.K. (2014). *Children and youth with autism spectrum disorder: Recent advances and innovations in assessment, education, and intervention.* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press

Recommended course activities:

Making Connections III

- Learning Inventory
- Review of indicated learning strategies
- Review of expectations in each course
- Review of current Individualized Education Program
- Participate in ARD-C
- Review of graduation plans



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- Review of current transcript
- Meet with educational planner
- Writing resume
- Observing appropriate interview behavior
- Role-Play with critique
- Behavior rehearsal exercises
- Discuss available work / volunteer opportunities
- Review how to obtain state identification (e.g., Driver's License, Identification Cards,

Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

The students participate in a class period that includes direct teaching of social skills instruction, but then is also monitored throughout the day by the Making Connections teacher and paraprofessionals. Monitoring consists of the staff consistently observing the students' other classes and providing prompting, redirection, and coaching of the learned social skills. This allows for the student to employ the learned strategies in an authentic circumstance and receive feedback from their trusted Making Connections staff. The combination of the Making Connections course and the monitoring serves to increase the students' social skills by moving them through all levels of learning (acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization).

The students will be evaluated using various minor and major grades as well as their progress towards their individualized goals. The progress towards their goals will be evaluated using consistently obtained data.

Teacher qualifications:

An assignment for a Making Connections course is allowed with one of the following certificates:

- Emotionally Disturbed
- Generic Special Education
- High School—Generic Special Education
- Language and/or Learning Disabilities
- Secondary Generic Special Education (Grades 6 – 12) (Grades 6 – 12 only)
- Severe Emotionally Disturbed and Autistic
- Special Education: Early Childhood – Grade 12

Additional information: