Case Study—Each student is required to complete a case study of an individual. The case study is designed to help each student learn how to assess developmental status in comparison with norms and expectations. Regardless of the age of the individual, the student is required to assess the person in terms of all the major areas of development (physical, motor, language, cognitive, social, emotional, moral). Case studies must be documented with observations and/or informal or formal assessments, along with legitimate sources of information about development during the particular period under investigation. The text may be used as one source of documentation, but at least two other sources must be used as well. Recommendations for future development must be made, in terms of experiences that will help to maximize development. The case study is an item that should be used as a part of the student’s Professional Development Plan. Attached with the case study should be an overall reflection on how the case study has helped the student meet course objectives and/or licensure standards.

The case study process may be completed in a variety of ways, but the following steps are helpful in formulating the final product:

1. Select a developmental period of interest (early childhood or young adulthood, for example) and select an individual for study.

2. Secure the individual’s or the parent/guardian’s written permission to conduct the case study. A permission statement should include the following: I, (name of parent/guardian) give permission for (name of 566 student) to collect data for the purpose of writing a case study with (name of child) as the focus. I understand that no real names will be used and that the identity of (name of child) will not be revealed in any other way. I understand that I will be provided with a copy of the case study and that I may comment on the findings presented in the case study. (Place for printed name of parent/guardian; place for signature of parent/guardian; date.) If the subject of the case study is an adult, simply eliminate all of the references to the child: I, name of subject, give permission for (name of 566 student) to collect data for the purpose of writing a case study on my development. The rest of the permission slip can be the same. The signed permission slip should be provided to the course instructor before data collection begins.

3. Collect data from a variety of sources. For example, depending upon the age of the subject for the case study, samples of school work, interviews with the subject, interviews with the parents/teachers, and observations of the person in interaction with peers or family members may be used. Interviews, samples of work, and observations must be documented with dates and times of data collection.

4. When writing the case study, use a fictitious name for the subject, unless the subject is an adult and wishes his or her identity to be known. Make a note in the case study that a fictitious name is being used to protect the confidentiality of the subject. It is usually wise to also use fictitious names for schools and/or teachers in order to prevent the identification of the subject.

5. Include a general description of the subject—including birth date and physical characteristics of the person (height, weight, body mass index [BMI], minimally).
6. Provide an assessment of the individual’s developmental status—in all aspects of development, based on the data collected and the professional literature. In the actual written case study, be sure to provide a separate heading for each aspect of development being discussed. Although this may be done in a variety of ways, it may be helpful to think of the individual’s strengths and areas needing improvement with regard to each aspect of development.

7. Document assessments with the use of objective observations, inventories or other assessment items, interviews, and/or interviews with other individuals (parents or teachers), along with references to professional literature about the developmental period or aspect of development being discussed.

8. Include documentation of all contacts with the individual and/or other sources of information. Documentation includes dates and times for observations/interviews and appropriate referencing of professional sources using the APA format.

9. Either within each section of the report on aspects of development OR as a final summary, make recommendations for the individual’s future development. In these recommendations, identify specific activities/goals that the individual could do to maximize his/her personal development for the successful resolution of future developmental milestones.

The case study should be typed in 12-point font, with exceptions for materials considered to be data (examples might include a child’s drawing, a sample of writing from the individual, responses to a standardized or constructed instrument); these materials should be placed in an appendix, labeled, and referenced in the text of the case study (obviously some documents may need to be scanned to submit electronically; case studies will be accepted in hard copy if the student desires). The case study itself should be presented with a cover sheet that includes the student’s name, course name and number, and date of submission. The case study should have the following components:

1. Background Information on Person—Describe without using real name.

2. Information on All Aspects of Development—in this section, provide an assessment of the person's level of functioning in all areas of development. A summary paragraph should be written describing the person's areas of strengths area, areas for improvement, and suggestions for future improved development in each area. Use text information, as well as information from other sources, to determine how you think this person's development compares to the "norm" for a person in this age group. You may also wish to locate developmental checklists or surveys to help in your assessment of the individual. You may do interviews of the individuals or the individual's parents/teachers/caregivers (with permission). Cite the references in the case study when you make statements about the individual's level of development. The case study should have at least the following sections on aspects of development: Physical/Motor--height, weight, physical activities/skills; Language/Cognitive--in adult stages--education, career information,
interests; Social/Emotional—skills, friends, significant relationships, ability to express feelings; Moral/Faith Development—what is right/wrong? Significant moral dilemmas?

If it seems more logical to the individual conducting the case study, the recommendations for future development may be included as a concluding summary, rather than putting specific recommendations within each section of the report. One caution in making overall statements about strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations for future development—avoid generalizing beyond the data presented in the case study!

3. Appendixes, if appropriate—in this section, include any raw data that would help to clarify the comments made throughout the case study. For example, if writing samples are used to provide evidence of a person’s language skills, then the writing samples might be included in the appendix. If a particular instrument is used to assess an individual, the instrument and the raw data may be included in the appendix. Because the data will vary significantly from individual to individual, there will be considerable variation in the material that is included in the appendix, if one if used.

4. References in APA format—if unfamiliar with the format, please check the Carson-Newman library web page under the link “How do I?” Sample APA reference citations are provided; the APA Manual of Style is also available in the library and in the Teacher Education Department Curriculum Lab.

5. Comments by Parent/Guardian—if the parent/guardian chooses to make comments on the written product, include their comments, again with no real names attached. If the parent/guardian chose to make no comments, indicate in a statement that no comments were made by the parent/guardian.

6. Reflection on the Case Study—the case study is a portfolio artifact item. Each student must submit a reflection that includes a statement about how the case study process helped the student meet course objectives, as well as helping him/her to develop his/her skills as a teacher, parent, or counselor.