**Topical Paper Instructions & Grading Criteria**

The topical paper is designed to explain the scholarly background, current popular understanding, and need for the information/skills developed by your project. In comparison to the information presented in the project itself, the paper should

- Use scholarly rather than conversational language. In particular, avoid slang and contractions. Key concepts should be defined using professional terminology.

- Present greater detail about the empirical and theoretical foundation of recommended practices and activities.

- Be in APA-style, including a title page and reference page.

- Explain why the project (as well as the information/skills developed) is desirable for the target audience. That is, why use this method of explaining these ideas to this population?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Grading Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Introduction (5 points) | • Introduction should be engaging as well as informative. Topic should be introduced in a way that makes the reader understand why this topic is important. What is the need that is addressed by your project and what is the project itself?  
• Introduction should clearly link your topic to the development of children from conception through age eight (as appropriate for the topic).  
• Anecdotes and personal experience are de-emphasized in formal writing and should be presented briefly (if at all).  
• The sources for all stories and/or facts should be clearly cited. |
| Content (30 Points) | • Available information on the topic should be completely explored. If you choose to present only one opinion or approach to caregiving/education in your project, you should explain the reason for that choice.  
• Key aspects of development should be explained. If a skill or ability is being studied, the stages/phases of the development should be linked to the appropriate ages and/or experiences. If appropriate, you should relate what you are describing about this topic to class material about development.  
• Relevant cultural and/or demographic information should be presented in a nonjudgmental manner. It should be clear if findings or approaches are appropriate for only some ages or demographic groups.  
• Empirically documented information should be clearly differentiated from theoretical information.  
• Any conclusions or recommendations should be clearly supported by explicit logic or empirically findings. This includes recommendations regarding parenting or educational strategies.  
• It should be clear why you chose this project format as a method of conveying this information to the audience.  
• It should be clear what outcomes (changes in the target population) you expect as a result of the project. For example, how will children’s behavior change as a result of playing a specific board game? |
**Conclusion** (5 Points)
- The conclusion should summarize the key points of the paper, and relate back to the key ideas presented in the introduction (i.e., available information on the topic, the choice of project, etc.).
- The conclusion should be clear and follow logically from the preceding information.
- The conclusion should not introduce any new information or sources.

**Clarity and Style** (10 Points)
- Language should be appropriate for formal, written work (which is different from the appropriate style for oral presentations, children’s books, and the like).
- Sentence style should be similar throughout the document.
- Grammar, spelling, and punctuation should be correct.
- Avoid rhetorical questions and frequent quotes.
- Ideas should follow a logical progression, so that paragraphs have a topic sentence and different paragraphs and ideas are related to a central theme.
- Information should be easy to understand.
- Detail should be appropriate; not too simplistic or too detailed. The amount of detail about any study or idea should match the importance of that idea, so that a larger portion of the paper is dedicated to important ideas and smaller portions to less important ideas.
- It should be clear when “new” information is being presented and when course ideas are being reviewed.
- Any problems note in the feedback to the oral presentation should be addressed.
- APA-style should be used throughout the paper, including in-text citations of sources.
- You may use pictures or diagrams if appropriate.

**50 Points Total**