

# **Pittsburg State University**

## **Cooperating Teacher Handbook**





# Pittsburg State University

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

**Office of Teacher Education**  
110 Hughes Hall  
1701 South Broadway  
Pittsburg, KS 66762-7520  
620-235-4489 fax 620-235-4421

Dear Cooperating Teacher:

Thank you for your willingness to mentor a student teacher into the profession. As a cooperating teacher, you have been recommended by your school district as someone who is willing and qualified to assist student teachers to become excellent teaching professionals. I know that being a cooperating teacher is a commitment that requires many hours of your already busy schedule. Please know that Pittsburg State University appreciates your willingness to share your students and classroom with our student teacher. By doing so, you allow the student teacher to see how theory is applied in practice.

Student teachers are part of the strong link between schools and the College of Education. The program they are completing is approved by the Kansas State Department of Education and nationally accredited through Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP).

You play an essential role in the mission of teacher education at Pittsburg State University. We hope this handbook will help you understand and support the student teaching experience. This handbook outlines the roles and expectations of you as a mentor, as well as those of student teachers. We have provided tools to help you with the observation portion of the experience. You will find several observation instruments in the appendix of this handbook that you can choose to use to help you informally assess the student teacher. Formal evaluations will be completed in the online evaluation system. Instructions for using this system are provided to you through correspondence from the Office of Teacher Education.

Thank you for serving as a model for the student teachers who may someday become your colleagues. We value the contributions you provide through your experience and perspective. As always, we welcome your input. You can visit our website at <http://www.pittstate.edu/college/education/teacher-education/> for more information. Please feel free to contact me or the student teacher's university supervisor with questions, input, and/or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Jean Dockers*

Jean Dockers, Ph.D.  
Director of Teacher Education  
Pittsburg State University

Email: [jdockers@pittstate.edu](mailto:jdockers@pittstate.edu)  
Phone: (620) 235-4636

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Background of Student Teachers	2
Welcoming Your Student Teacher	3
The Professional Semester Team	4
Responsibilities of the Cooperating Teacher	5
Modeling	6
Co-Teaching and Coaching Models	7
Professional Liability	8
Professional Semester Timeline	10
Phases of the Professional Semester	10
Suggested Timeline for Full Semester Placements	11
Suggested Timeline for Split Placements	12
Attendance Policy	13
Policy on Outside Activities/Classes during Professional Semester	14
Student Teacher as a Substitute	14
Observation and Evaluation	15
Performance Evaluation Criteria	16
Major Assignment Descriptions	17
Dealing with Issues involving Student Teachers	18
Miscellaneous Important Notes	20
Frequent Questions and Answers of Student Teachers	21
Frequent Questions and Answers of Cooperating Teachers	23
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
Professional Knowledge Base	1
Field Evaluation Instrument	4
Expectations for Professional Behavior for Student Teachers	8
Optional Tools for Informal Observation	15
Mentoring Article from Educational Leadership	21

***The College of Education reserves the right to amend any policies, rules or regulations as needed to best serve its constituents.***

## Introduction

The College of Education at Pittsburg State University considers the professional semester to be the culminating experience for its teacher preparation programs. The experience provides students with the opportunity to implement many of the strategies and techniques they have learned in their professional coursework and to translate theory into practice. It is also an opportunity to work closely with an experienced, highly qualified, master teacher.

Cooperating teachers are one of the most important resources in the professional semester experience. You serve as mentors, confidants, evaluators, cheerleaders, role models, and trusted counselors. Cooperating teachers are carefully selected with the goal that your expertise will provide a nurturing environment for student teachers. Evidence shows that student teachers model their cooperating teachers and are therefore influenced by all qualities of the cooperating teacher. This influence will be carried into their future classrooms. It should be noted that there are three primary characteristics of an effective teacher. An effective teacher...

- has **positive expectations** for student success.
- has strong classroom management skills.
- knows how to **design lessons for student mastery**.

This handbook is designed to be a helpful guide for being an effective cooperating teacher. It outlines certain expectations of you as a cooperating teacher and important functions you will perform, while allowing for a degree of flexibility in carrying them out according to what is best suited for your classroom. Some of the important functions of the role of cooperating teacher include:

- Daily observations
- Long term observations and evidence gathering
- Conferences
- Evaluations

Further, university supervisors play an important role in assisting the student teachers. They serve as liaisons between the university and student teachers and assist cooperating teachers in directing student teachers' development. If at any time you have questions or concerns, you should contact the university supervisor or Director of Teacher Education.

## **Background of Student Teachers**

During the professional semester, it is understood that student teachers are trying, applying and expanding on professional knowledge, skills and understanding gained during their coursework and learning new knowledge, skills and understanding under the direction of a licensed and successful classroom teacher. Student teachers come to the professional semester having had diverse experiences in multiple classrooms and working with students in a variety of settings.

These student teachers are actually “students of teaching”. They are not experienced teachers nor are they competent yet in all areas of teaching. The professional semester is designed to be a learning experience to help the individual student teacher develop or improve those skills needed for effective teaching. To this end, please give constructive feedback and effective strategies for the student teacher to use in specific areas of deficiency.

You should perceive a student teacher just as you would any student coming to you as a teacher. We encourage you to determine the student teacher’s strengths and weaknesses and then assist him/her in planning learning experiences to develop his/her full potential.

## Welcoming your Student Teacher

Student teachers tend to be very excited and nervous at the beginning of the semester. This is due partially to the unknown aspects of the experience. These anxieties can be alleviated in part by helping the student teacher become an accepted member of the professional staff. There are several things that the cooperating teacher can do to accomplish this:

- Visit with your student teacher prior to the first day of school and share your expectations of him/her.
- Have him/her attend professional development meetings, work days, etc.
- Introduce him/her to other teachers, administrators, office staff, and other key personnel.
- Introduce him/her to the class as a teacher on the first day.
- Provide a workspace that he/she can consider his/her own for the semester.
- Make textbooks and other curriculum materials accessible.
- Provide a copy of the school's policy handbooks, school map, class schedule, etc.
- Discuss instructional resources available and procedures for using these resources.
- Share your classroom routines and instructional procedures.
- Show him/her where to find supplies and equipment.
- Encourage the student teacher to become familiar with services provided in the school, such as library services, counseling services, and special services programs.
- Incorporate your student teacher into routine activities within the first few weeks.
- Help the student teacher build relationships with the students in the classroom. Advise him/her of any specific medical or behavioral problems that might arise with students.
- Invite the student teacher to co-teach with you after s/he has become familiar with the procedures and strategies you implement in your lessons.
- Set aside time to discuss steps you take when preparing for class. For example, share how you plan lessons, select materials, present the lesson, evaluate the level of success, etc.

We want the student teacher to project a confident and assertive demeanor before the students. Your encouragement and support will help your student teacher gain confidence as s/he begins a professional teaching career.

## The Professional Semester Team

Pittsburg State University envisions the professional semester experience as a “partnership” between the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, the district administrators, the university supervisors, and the Office of Teacher Education. The team effort provided, when all parties involved are directed toward a common goal, supports a successful experience for the student teacher. Team members and their roles include:

**Student Teacher:** A teacher candidate who has completed a sequenced course of study that prepares him or her for classroom teaching under the guidance of a cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The focus for the student teacher is the welfare and learning of the students in his or her classroom. While the student teacher is in a learning experience, he or she plans lessons and interacts with students in a professional manner that meets the needs of all students.

**Cooperating Teacher:** An experienced, licensed/certified, highly qualified classroom teacher working in a state accredited school. The administrator selects the cooperating teacher to guide the student teacher throughout the semester.

**University Supervisor:** University faculty member from the Office of Teacher Education who serves as instructor of the professional semester courses, facilitates the professional semester seminars, and supervises the student teacher’s experience in the classroom. The university supervisor acts as a mentor and provides guidance, feedback, and support.

**Academic Supervisor:** A program representative from the student teacher’s academic department. The academic supervisor provides content-specific support to the student teacher throughout the program. During the professional semester, the academic supervisor maintains contact with the student teacher and makes a minimum of one site visit for observation purposes.

**Placement Coordinator:** The coordinator of all teacher candidate field placements. Contract agreements are secured between the university and K-12 school districts for placement of teacher candidates at all levels.

**Director of Teacher Education:** The director provides oversight for all teacher education program functions and candidates. The Office of Teacher Education houses teacher candidate files and records.

**Cooperating Administrators:** The administrator serves as the contact person between the school district and Pittsburg State University Office of Teacher Education. He or she is responsible for selecting experienced, highly qualified, master teachers to serve as cooperating teachers.

## Responsibilities of the Cooperating Teacher

The cooperating teacher is the person who works most closely with the student teacher. Cooperating teachers are selected by building principals and district level administrators to serve as mentors. In this most important role, it is the responsibility of the cooperating teacher to acquaint the student teacher to the school setting and provide an environment that facilitates an opportunity for success in the professional semester and beyond.

The cooperating teacher is legally responsible for all that takes place in his or her classroom. While the student teacher is eager to learn and is prepared to perform the duties of a beginning teacher, ultimately, it is the role of the cooperating teacher to monitor the lesson planning, classroom management implementation, teaching technique, and interpersonal interaction of the student teacher. To accomplish this, the cooperating teacher will have the following major responsibilities, as well as others that may be appropriate in specific situations:

1. When possible, meet your student teacher prior to the beginning of the professional semester to provide initial orientation to the classroom and the students. This is a good time to give a tour of the building and introduce him/her to the principal and other support staff. Provide information concerning classroom management, discipline policies, class schedules, and other classroom and school policies. Acquaint the student teacher with materials and resources available in the school.
2. Be aware that student teachers may not have fully developed classroom management skills. You should prepare your student teacher to anticipate potential issues. Discuss ideas about prevention of specific behavior problems in the classroom. Encourage him/her to act promptly and confidently with behavior problems. Share strategies that have worked for you in your career. Explain any existing procedures or systems you currently have in place for specific students (e.g. behavior charts, hand signals, etc.).
3. Discuss possible unit/lesson topics with your student teacher early in the semester. Set aside time to discuss steps you take when preparing for class. For example, share how you plan lessons, select materials, present the lesson, evaluate the level of success, etc. With the student teacher, develop short and long-range plans. The unit topics, as well as all curriculum issues, are entirely up to you. However, please note the **student teacher must complete an integrated teaching unit plan (Teacher Work Sample) as a part of state mandated requirements in the professional semester.**
4. Encourage and allow the student teacher to be creative and try new teaching strategies. It is important to understand that they may not do things the way you would and they will make mistakes. Those mistakes are great opportunities to learn. Remember they are *students*.
5. Determine, with your student teacher, ways you can work together during the required teaching time to provide the best possible experience for the students in your class. Initially, team teaching is an excellent way to facilitate this and phase the student teacher into taking over the classroom.

Gradually, and patiently, turn over instructional responsibilities to the student teacher. Refer to “Phases of the Professional Semester” found on pages 10-13 to better understand the process. As he/she exhibits the readiness to do so, allow the student teacher to assume responsibilities. Also refer to the suggested timelines found on these pages.

6. Require the student teacher to submit formal lesson plans for the first 2 - 5 lessons of a new subject. These should be submitted in advance of the teaching date in order for you to review and give feedback and to allow them to alter the lesson as needed. Support, direction, and feedback are extremely important, particularly during early lessons.
7. Provide **consistent, ongoing supervision and evaluation** of your student teacher’s work by:
  - a. Observing their teaching and providing written and oral feedback. There are tools to assist you included in the appendix of this handbook. These tools are a resource that can be used at your discretion.
  - b. Encouraging the use of technology to facilitate student learning as well as communication among members of the professional semester support team.
  - c. Communicating freely and often with your student teacher.
  - d. Collaborating with the university supervisor to help the student teacher develop appropriate knowledge and skills needed to be a successful classroom teacher.
8. Immediately inform the university supervisor or the Office of Teacher Education if the student encounters serious problems.
9. Provide three online formal assessments during the semester. The Office of Teacher Education will provide information regarding these evaluations including submission dates and access instructions.
10. Provide opportunities for the student teacher to function as a professional colleague during the professional semester, encourage him/her to become involved in professional organizations and to participate in professional growth opportunities, such as school district workshops.

## **Modeling**

The cooperating teacher models how he or she integrates content knowledge and professional, pedagogical skills into teaching and learning in the daily operation of a class. This should include instructional approaches, classroom management strategies, relationship and culture building in the classroom, establishment of routines, time management, transitions, and record keeping.

The cooperating teacher models “thinking like a teacher” or thinks aloud with the student teacher to make his or her decision making process transparent for the student teacher. In this way, the cooperating teacher helps the student teacher not only to learn instructional strategies and methods but also to

acquire the professional decision making skills that will prepare him or her to take reflective actions in the future. Therefore, the cooperating teacher should:

- Model a variety of teaching strategies and classroom management strategies appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse students with and without disabilities.
- Help the student teacher to understand the importance of working with parents, families, and service providers.
- Model uses of instructional technology, media, and electronic materials.
- Spend time “thinking aloud” with the student teacher to discuss what will happen in the classroom, what has happened in the classroom, why instruction has gone in a particular direction, determine next steps, etc.

## Co-Teaching and Coaching Models

Cooperating teachers are encouraged to incorporate student teachers into instruction using either co-teaching or coaching. These methods help in the development of the student teacher as well as the instruction of the students in your classroom. With the co-teaching techniques, the student teacher should assume a larger role in the planning and teaching as the semester progresses. Various techniques are briefly described below. Please contact the Office of Teacher Education if you would like additional resources for these models.

### Co-Teaching Techniques:

*One Teach, One Assist:* In this approach, one person will be responsible for all teaching while the second moves about the room monitoring behavior, assisting individual students, etc.

*One Teach, One Observe:* Again in this approach, one person will be responsible for all teaching. The second person will observe one or more students to collect various data such as student engagement, active on-task time, etc.

*Parallel Teaching:* The classroom is divided into two with both instructors teaching the same material at the same time. This allows for a small teacher to student ratio. It can also allow the same material to be taught using two different techniques.

*Alternative Teaching:* For this approach, one instructor manages the whole group while the second works with a small group inside or outside of the classroom. The small group instruction could be varied for students needing additional assistance, missing assignments, etc.

*Station Teaching:* For station teaching, the classroom is split into various teaching stations with the two instructors running two stations while the other stations operate independently (possibly with an aide).

*Team Teaching:* The two instructors work as a team to teach one lesson. This can be used effectively to encourage a group discussion with the students. Both teachers take a role in managing the lesson and classroom.

## Academic Coaching:

The coaching process can be used to help the student teacher develop a complex teaching technique or an area that they are currently demonstrating weaknesses. The process involves five steps:

1. Identifying the need of the student teacher
2. Modeling the desired behavior
3. Having the student teacher practice the skill without students
4. Having the student teacher practice the skill with an individual student or small group
5. Having the student teacher use the skill in large group instruction

After each step, there should be an opportunity for evaluation and discussion. Encourage the student teacher to practice self-reflection by asking questions. They should also take an active role in planning for the execution of the next step in the process.

Once you have identified the technique that needs further development, have the student teacher observe the technique in various situations. If it is possible, you may want the student teacher to observe other master teachers as well. The observations can be guided by providing particular elements to be noted. After several opportunities for observation, a conference should be held with the student teacher to plan how to integrate the technique into his or her own teaching. S/he should be given the opportunity to practice the technique in private or in front of an empty classroom. After further reflection and planning based on the learnings of the self-practice, step 4 should be implemented. If necessary, repeat steps 3 and 4 until you feel the student teacher is ready to move on to step 5. If you feel that the student teacher needs more development of the technique in focus, you may want to repeat some of steps 2 – 5.

Although time consuming, the coaching technique can be a valuable and rewarding experience for both the student teacher and cooperating teacher.

## **Professional Liability**

In the weeks before assuming responsibility for the classroom, student teachers should not be left alone on a regular basis with the class. When the student teacher can adequately handle the teaching assignment, leaving the classroom can occur more frequently. Until classroom management skills are adequate, keep time out of the classroom brief and stay in the vicinity of the classroom.

You may choose to stay in the classroom part of the time during the total teaching weeks or you may want to initiate some team teaching activities. The cooperating teacher is never excluded from his or her classroom.

The student teacher should not be left alone on a playground or field trip with a group of students without a licensed teacher nearby. Student teachers may assist with the planning and chaperoning of field trips for his or her assigned class in conjunction with the cooperating teacher. Student teachers may not drive their personal vehicles to transport students on a field trip due to liability.

Student teachers are not covered by PSU or the school district's liability insurance. The students are encouraged, but not required, to purchase liability insurance during the professional semester.

## Professional Semester Timeline

**All student teachers (fall and spring) are required to report to their student teaching sites on the first day of the semester for the assigned district, including opening meetings, professional development, and work days.**

Student teachers will follow the calendar of the school district in which they are assigned. If the district has a holiday and the university is in session, the student teacher will have a holiday. The same applies if the university has a holiday but the school is in session, the student teacher does not get a holiday. If the school or district has scheduled staff development days, the student teacher is required to participate unless specifically requested by the district to not attend.

For a set number of days during the PSU semester, student teachers will be required to attend professional semester seminars on the PSU campus. **The professional semester seminars are conducted from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on those designated dates.** Teacher candidates are to report to the cooperating school every operating day their attendance is not required at these campus seminars.

## Phases of the Professional Semester

**The ultimate goal is to have the teacher candidate assume all duties and responsibilities for 3 to 5 weeks during the professional semester.** *There should be no instance in which the candidate immediately assumes total responsibility for the class.*

The timeline for assuming full responsibility in the classroom is unique for each candidate. The professional semester consists of three phases.

- **Phase one (Phase In)** consists of candidates beginning to assume responsibility for routines and procedures such as attendance and small group work.
- **Phase two (Take Over)** consists of assuming responsibility of managing the classroom under the guidance of the cooperating teacher. The student teacher's full responsibility for the classroom for the required 3 to 5 week period should occur in this phase.
- **Phase three (Phase Out)** consists of gradually returning the responsibility of the classroom to the cooperating teacher.

For **split placements (PE, Art and Music)**, the timeline will be shortened and accelerated. It will be repeated in the second placement. A special consideration for split placements is the Teacher Work Sample (TWS) assignment. Only one TWS is required so candidates can choose to complete the TWS in either the elementary or secondary placement. **The ultimate goal is to have the student teacher assume all duties and responsibilities for 3 weeks at each placement during the professional semester.** *There should be no instance in which the candidate immediately assumes total responsibility for the class.*

## Suggested Timeline for Full Semester Placements

CT= Cooperating Teacher    US= University Supervisor    TWS= Teacher Work Sample

### **Phase 1 Weeks 1 and Weeks 2-3:**

#### **Role of the Student Teacher:**

- Become oriented to the school and classroom
- Become acquainted with the school's policies, curriculum, culture, and personnel
- Become acquainted with the classroom's instructional equipment, procedures, rules, management plans, and students
- Become actively involved in assisting the cooperating teacher
- Begin to work with individuals and small groups or teach specific lessons
- Meet daily/weekly with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect

#### **Role of the Cooperating Teacher:**

- Orient the student teacher to the unique culture of the school including school policies and procedures, locations of resources, map of the building, student handbook, etc.
- Orient the student teacher to the unique culture of the classroom including everyday management and organization, textbooks, teaching schedule, upcoming unit topics, etc.
- Do the majority of the daily planning, provide feedback, act as co- teacher in instruction when appropriate, and observe and evaluate the work of the student teacher
- Meet daily/weekly with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect

### **Phase 2 Weeks 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12:**

#### **Role of the Student Teacher:**

- Increase involvement in teaching
- Plan instruction, gather necessary materials, and carry out instruction
- Write lesson plans and share those with the cooperating teacher and university supervisor
- Begin to take over beginning with a subject area or class section, adding more subjects and responsibilities gradually until full responsibility has been reached
- Become fully responsible for the classroom including lesson planning, implementation, and management of the curriculum and students
- Meet with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect

#### **Role of the Cooperating Teacher:**

- Approve all planning, provide feedback, act as co-teacher in instruction when appropriate, and observe and evaluate the work of the student teacher
- Provide the support system necessary for student teacher to "try" new methods and approaches, realizing that the results might not always be predictable or perfect
- Spend time out of the classroom for longer periods of time
- Meet daily/weekly with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect
- **Complete the Initial Evaluation online -- Week 4**

### **Phase 3 Weeks 13-16 and Remaining Time:**

#### **Role of the Student Teacher:**

- Gradually begin to phase out of full responsibility by returning the classroom to the cooperating teacher
- Spend time observing other classrooms
- Meet as needed with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes and reflect

#### **Role of the Cooperating Teacher:**

- Begin to take the classroom responsibilities back from the student teacher
- Meet as needed with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect
- **Complete the Final Evaluation online -- Week 15**

Suggested Timeline for Split Placements

CT= Cooperating Teacher    US= University Supervisor    TWS= Teacher Work Sample

Phase	Weeks	Role of the Student Teacher	Role of the Cooperating Teacher
<b>1</b>	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become oriented to the school and classroom</li> <li>• Become acquainted with the school’s policies, curriculum, culture, and personnel</li> <li>• Become acquainted with the classroom’s instructional equipment, procedures, rules, management plans, and students</li> <li>• Become actively involved in assisting the cooperating teacher</li> <li>• Begin to work with individuals and small groups or teach specific lessons</li> <li>• Meet daily/weekly with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orient the student teacher to the unique culture of the school including school policies and procedures, locations of resources, map of the building, student handbook, etc.</li> <li>• Orient the student teacher to the unique culture of the classroom including everyday management and organization, textbooks, teaching schedule, upcoming unit topics, etc.</li> <li>• Do the majority of the daily planning, provide feedback, act as co-teacher in instruction when appropriate, and observe and evaluate the work of the student teacher</li> <li>• Meet daily/weekly with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase involvement in teaching</li> <li>• Plan instruction, gather necessary materials, and carry out instruction</li> <li>• Write lesson plans and share those with the cooperating teacher and university supervisor</li> <li>• Begin to take over beginning with a subject area or class section, adding more subjects and responsibilities gradually until full responsibility has been reached</li> <li>• Become fully responsible for the classroom including lesson planning, implementation, and management of the curriculum and students</li> <li>• Meet with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve all planning, provide feedback, act as co-teacher in instruction when appropriate, and observe and evaluate the work of the student teacher</li> <li>• Provide the support system necessary for student teacher to “try” new methods and approaches, realizing that the results might not always be predictable or perfect</li> <li>• Spend time out of the classroom for longer periods of time</li> <li>• Meet daily/weekly with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> <li>• <b>Complete the Initial Evaluation online -- Week 3</b></li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weeks 5-7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the student teacher to do all planning and teaching of the curriculum</li> <li>• Allow the student teacher to manage the students in the classroom</li> <li>• Meet as needed with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradually begin to phase out of full responsibility by returning the classroom to the cooperating teacher</li> <li>• Spend time observing other classrooms</li> <li>• Meet as needed with the cooperating teacher to ask questions, discuss concerns, seek clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to take the classroom responsibilities back from the student teacher</li> <li>• Meet as needed with the student teacher to answer questions, discuss concerns, provide clarifications, celebrate successes, and reflect</li> <li>• <b>Complete the Final Evaluation online -- Week 8</b></li> </ul>

\*Cooperating teachers in both placements should complete both the initial and final evaluations .Pittsburg State University | Cooperating Teacher Handbook 12

## Attendance Policy

The professional semester experience consists of a full semester for candidates to be in a classroom with a licensed teacher. Below are the guidelines for attendance during this semester.

### **Excused Absences**

1. Death of immediate family member
  2. Illness – Self or others in immediate family – Doctor excuse required
  3. Court appearances/jury duty
  4. Participation in university activities if member of a team or group (track meets, concert tours, etc.)
  5. National conferences if approved by the cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and Director of Teacher Education
- \*MAY NOT MISS CAMPUS SEMINARS for parent/teacher conferences, field trips, or other school functions.

### **Procedure for Student Teacher to Follow if School Must Be Missed**

1. Notify the cooperating teacher as early as possible.
2. Call the school office.
3. Notify your university supervisor via their preferred method of contact.

**Failure to comply with the above procedures will put the student teacher's professional semester completion in jeopardy.**

Student teachers are allowed 5 days of absence (excused or unexcused) before a consequence is imposed by the Director of Teacher Education.

Under no circumstance should a student teacher be absent without notifying the cooperating teacher and university supervisor. If this occurs or becomes a habit, please notify the university supervisor and/or the Office of Teacher Education immediately.

## **Policy on Outside Activities/Classes during Professional Semester**

The professional semester is considered the beginning of a teaching career, and it is expected that student teachers' energies be focused on gaining as much practical experience in the classroom as possible. Therefore, outside employment or taking additional coursework is not advised during the professional semester. If employment or additional course work is a necessity, the student teacher must petition the Committee for Admission to and Retention in Teacher Education (CARTE) for approval. A maximum number of hours that will be approved for outside employment is 20 hours per week. If a conflict should become apparent or a student teacher experiences difficulties, it is expected the student teacher will reevaluate their obligations and make appropriate changes.

## **Student Teacher as a Substitute**

Kansas state regulation (KSDE 91-19-6 e) and Pittsburg State University College of Education policy do not allow student teachers to fill any position except for those duties designated within the Student Teaching Certificate issued by the Office of Teacher Education in conjunction with KSDE. It is imperative that student teachers not be placed in a situation that is contrary to state regulations or puts the school and student teacher in a liable situation. The regulation states “certified student teachers shall be prohibited from serving as regular or substitute teachers in Kansas-accredited or Kansas-approved educational agencies.”

Note: This does not mean the student teacher cannot be left alone in the classroom and/or with students for periods of time, as appropriate in the timeline.

## Observation and Evaluation

One of the most important functions of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor is to help the student teacher develop his or her instructional and management skills. One of the best ways to help your student teacher know what they are doing well and to identify areas where growth is needed is by regular observation followed by feedback. Evaluations are a shared responsibility. The student teacher should participate in the evaluation process through conferences using the established criteria. Assess your student teacher throughout the semester in multiple ways. Informal assessments may be implemented using anecdotal notes or by a method of your choice. In the appendix, you will find several tools you can use when observing the student teacher. Allow the student teacher to reflect upon and discuss the observations with you. He or she should participate in the development of a plan of action to address any areas of weakness.

Three online formal assessments will be completed by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The Office of Teacher Education will provide information regarding these evaluations including submission dates and access instructions.

University supervisors make one introductory visit and complete three formal evaluations during the semester. If necessary, more visits may be scheduled. Secondary and PK-12 student teachers are also observed by an academic supervisor from his or her major department at least one time during the semester. Below is a chart that shows the estimated timeline for university supervisor visits.

Visit 1 = Weeks 1-2 “Howdy” – Getting acquainted; reviewing procedures; setting professional goals for growth

Visit 2 = Weeks 4-6 First Formal Written Observation; initial evaluation submitted online; outlining interventions if necessary

Visit 3 = Weeks 8-10 Second Formal Written Observation; mid evaluation submitted online

Visit 4 = Weeks 12-16 Final Formal Written Observation; final evaluation submitted to university

**\*Please note one visit will be made using video technology.**

Following each observation visit, a three-way conference is held between the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor where the evaluations of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor are discussed. Other conferences may be held as needed.

## **Performance Evaluation Criteria**

Student teacher performance evaluations are centered on the four categories from the Professional Knowledge Base and Field Evaluation Instrument (FEI). A copy of the FEI in its entirety is included in the appendix.

### **The Learner and Learning**

Professional educators must understand that learning and development patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process, and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.

### **Content**

Professional educators must have a deep and flexible understanding of the field and be able to draw upon the central concepts and structures of their discipline as they work with learners. They integrate cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and communication) to help learners apply content to propose solutions, forge new understandings, solve problems and imagine possibilities. Professional educators connect information to local, state, national and global issues.

### **Instructional Practice**

Professional educators understand and integrate assessment, planning, and instructional strategies in coordinated and engaging ways for effective practice. They understand how to design, implement, interpret, and communicate results from a range of assessments.

### **Professional Responsibility**

Professional educators create and support safe, productive learning environments. They must engage in meaningful and intensive professional learning and self-renewal by regularly examining practice through ongoing study, self-reflection and collaboration. Professional educators contribute to accomplishing their school's mission and goals and demonstrate leadership by modeling ethical behavior, contributing to positive changes in practice, and advancing their profession.

## Major Assignment Descriptions

Each course correlating to the professional semester has its own objectives and requirements; however, the coursework is designed to be integrated with the classroom teaching experience. A number of class requirements may apply to several different course objectives. Changes and/or adjustments may be made at the discretion of the instructor to meet class needs or individual school district schedules. Other activities will be assigned and actual due dates for all assignments will be set by the seminar instructor.

Major assignments include, but are not limited to:

- **Orientation Assignment:** The student teacher will complete an orientation assignment at the beginning of the semester. Using the school's policy manual, school report card, and working with you, service personnel and administration, the assignment will help the student teacher become familiar with: school policies, teacher policies, school curricula, school culture, classroom layout, classroom procedures, teacher routines, classroom rules and expectations, etc.
- **Lesson Plans:** The student teacher is expected to provide his or her university supervisor with a copy of a typed lesson plan for the lesson he or she is teaching for each visit. Student teachers should consult the supervisor about providing them with a copy of class handouts, presentations, or other materials used in the lesson.
- **Shadow Study:** The student teacher will select one pupil with your guidance and observe his/her behavior throughout the course of one school day as s/he moves through his/her regular schedule. The student teacher will be required to show professional insight while writing a synopsis of that student's behavior.
- **Teacher Work Sample (TWS):** The TWS is an integrated teaching unit written by the student teacher based upon Kansas College and Career Ready Standards and your input. The TWS must be grade and age appropriate and lessons from the TWS must be taught in the assigned classroom. The score for this assignment is reported to the Kansas State Department of Education as a part of the license application process.
- **Professional Website:** The professional website is a collection of artifacts that should document the student teacher's mastery of the Professional Knowledge Base and effective teaching. The website will include the student teacher's best work.

## Dealing with Issues involving Student Teachers

The professional semester is a very demanding and stressful experience for most student teachers. The majority of student teachers quickly organize their schedules so that they are able to function successfully both professionally and personally. Each student teacher is unique in the amount of supervision and assistance needed from the cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Most issues which arise between the cooperating teacher and the candidate are resolved through effective communication on a daily basis.

Occasionally, some incompatibility may arise, thus interfering with teaching and learning. If this should occur, **the university supervisor or Director of Teacher Education must be notified at once.** Few student teachers encounter difficulties to a degree that requires intervention. Intervention can occur on several levels. The severity of the concern or issue dictates at which level the intervention begins. The levels of intervention are listed below:

**Level 1:** If the cooperating teacher or student teacher is unable to satisfactorily discuss the concern or issue with the other party, he or she is to contact the university supervisor. Working as a team, the university supervisor, cooperating teacher and student teacher are usually able to correct the problem.

**Level 2:** The university supervisor notifies and discusses the concern or issue with the Director of Teacher Education. A plan of action is developed and a contract may be written specifying action necessary to address the concern or issue. The university supervisor shares ideas with the cooperating teacher and the student teacher to assist in executing the plan of action. If necessary, the director meets with the student teacher and outlines possible outcomes. The director also gathers information from and communicates with the cooperating teacher and appropriate administrators.

**Level 3:** The Director of Teacher Education notifies the chairperson of the student's major academic department and a committee is organized for developing a plan that best meets the needs of the student teacher, students in the classroom, and cooperating teacher. The committee will consist of the university supervisor, Director of Teacher Education, and at least one faculty member from the major department. As appropriate, the cooperating teacher and/or building administrator may be part of this committee. In some instances, the candidate may be required to appear before this committee. Options available for committee consideration include:

- 1) Leave the student teacher in the present situation, creating a contract that outlines areas that must show marked improvement immediately.
- 2) Place the student teacher at another site, if the new cooperating teacher and administrator agree after being advised of the issue at the original placement.
- 3) Bring the student teacher back to campus for remediation and placement in a later semester.
- 4) Remove the student teacher from the professional semester and the teacher education program.
- 5) Deny licensure application.

Students have the right to appeal any decision to CARTE. After all other options have been exhausted, the final opportunity for appeal is to meet with the Dean of the College of Education.

*If at any time an administrator in a cooperating school advises the Director of Teacher Education that a student teacher must be removed from a placement, **the candidate will be removed immediately.***

If you feel the student teacher placed in your classroom is not a good match, you should contact the university supervisor assigned to the student teacher and/or Director of Teacher Education.

## Miscellaneous Important Notes

- The student teacher is a guest in your classroom. He or she is encouraged to listen and observe, question respectfully and never get involved in gossip or negative conversation in the building.
- There are many parents and community members volunteering in the schools. Student teachers' conversations with others in the work room, hallways and lounge must be professional. They are to avoid discussing personal issues and confidential information.
- Administering medicine to any student is not permitted at any time. The cooperating teacher should never give the student teacher permission to administer medicine.
- Corporal punishment (even in the mildest form) is strictly prohibited. Student teachers are instructed to be cautious of the ways in which they touch students, especially if angry or frustrated. Student teachers are asked to use good judgment at all times when touching students. Cooperating teachers need to discuss school policy regarding this topic.
- Student teachers are not to drive their own cars to take students on field trips or to deliver them anywhere away from campus, to avoid any possible liability for any accidents or injuries.
- It is highly recommended that the student teacher gives information to parents about their students only in the cooperating teacher's presence and with the cooperating teacher's permission.
- It is recommended for student teachers to grade only the work for the subjects they are teaching. If a student teacher is experiencing pressure to do a large amount of grading and busy work, he or she is advised to notify the university supervisor immediately.
- Writing lesson plans or using the computer for personal reasons during class time is not permitted. This time should be used to observe or collaborate with the cooperating teacher and/or to work with students.
- Confidentiality regarding students, parents of students, or any information shared by the cooperating teacher **MUST** be maintained at all times.
- Student teachers are required to dress appropriately and professionally at all times. Appropriate grooming and hygiene are part of the professional image they create for themselves.
- Professional communication and demeanor are the hallmarks of a good student teacher.
- Student teachers are not to discuss their personal lives or any aspect of their lives that could be deemed inappropriate. This includes attention to any information that may be posted on social media.

## Frequent Questions and Answers of Student Teachers

- ? What if the principal of the school requests that I not wear certain jewelry or clothing?
  - Do not wear it! You are required to follow the rules and regulations of the school district including dress codes.
  
- ? What time should I go to school and how long should I remain?
  - Follow the school schedule. Your hours should be consistent with those of your cooperating teacher.
  
- ? If my cooperating teacher does not ask me to be involved with classroom activities, what should I do?
  - Take initiative. Volunteer to help with routine activities and share your desire to be involved in the classroom with the cooperating teacher.
  
- ? What should I focus on during my first few weeks in the classroom?
  - Observe how the teacher manages the classroom, presents lessons, responds to student questions, organizes materials, and relates to students and other staff members. This is a good time to ask “Why?” questions.
  
- ? Do I need to make daily lesson plans even if the cooperating teacher does not request a copy?
  - Yes. Learning to teach is a process. Planning lessons as you begin to learn the art and science of teaching will help you to think through the details you might otherwise overlook. **The university supervisor will request your lesson plan when observing you in the classroom.** Lesson plans provide structure that leads to successful teaching.
  
- ? What should I do if I must be absent from school?
  - Contact your cooperating teacher and university supervisor as soon as possible and share the reason for your absence. You should refer to the attendance policy for specific information.
  
- ? If I am injured while at school, does the school district insurance cover me?
  - No. You need to secure your own personal insurance. The school district is not liable for any injuries to you as you are not an employee of the district. There are several options for liability insurance. You may discuss this concern with your university supervisor.

? If I have a problem, to whom should I talk?

- First, speak with your cooperating teacher; if this does not solve the problem, inform the university supervisor (asking for help is not a sign of weakness or bad teaching!). Your supervisor can help you develop a plan of action to address the concern or issue. If you do not feel that these steps have been successful, contact the Director of Teacher Education.

? When do I apply for teacher licensure?

- During the final professional semester seminar, you will be guided through the process for applying for your license. **You are not eligible for your license until your degree has been posted** and you have met all other requirements.

? If I need special accommodations, from whom should I seek assistance?

- You should contact the Center for Student Accommodations in 218 Russ Hall. They can be contacted by phone at 620-235-4309.

## Frequent Questions and Answers of Cooperating Teachers

- ? How long should the student observe before participating in class?
- Involve your student teacher in the classroom immediately by assigning responsibilities such as taking attendance, working with individuals or small groups, assisting with lab projects, etc.
- ? How soon should the student teacher begin full time teaching responsibilities?
- This varies according to the student teacher and the type of classroom. The university supervisor will discuss this during the “HOWDY” visit. Allow the student teacher to gradually take over classes until he or she is responsible for all classes. **The ultimate goal is to have the teacher candidate assume all duties and responsibilities for 3 to 5 weeks during the professional semester.** *There should be no instance in which the candidate immediately assumes total responsibility for the class.* During the final two weeks of the semester, allow time for observing and visiting other classrooms in the district.
  - For split placements, the timeline will be shortened and accelerated. **The ultimate goal is to have the student teacher assume all duties and responsibilities for 3 weeks at each placement during the professional semester.** *There should be no instance in which the candidate immediately assumes total responsibility for the class.*
- ? Should the student teacher prepare daily lesson plans?
- The student teacher should develop a lesson plan for each lesson taught consistent with the school’s policy. The cooperating teacher should review the plan and provide constructive feedback.
- ? Should the student teacher make long term lesson plans?
- When preparing for taking over full teaching responsibility, long-term plans should be developed for all lessons. Again, guidance from the cooperating teacher is helpful. Monitor yourself so that you are not doing more of the work than the student teacher. Your support and encouragement are vital to the success of the lessons.
- ? Is it okay for the student teacher to use some of the cooperating teacher’s lesson plans and unit materials?
- During the early stages of teaching, this will provide the student teacher with ideas and structure for making his or her own lesson plans. However, the candidate must create his/her own Teacher Work Sample unit and lessons with your guidance.

- ? If the student teacher makes a mistake in teaching the lesson, should I correct him or her during the lesson in front of the class?
- Avoid criticism of the student teacher in public whether with students or faculty and staff. Conference with the student teacher in private when the need arises. Make notes of mistakes, point them out and discuss strategies for making improvements. Providing constructive feedback in a non-threatening manner provides the best learning experience.
- ? Should I leave the room while the student teacher is teaching?
- At the beginning of the semester, avoid leaving for any length of time. When the student teacher becomes familiar with your classroom management methods and both you and the student teacher feel comfortable, it is desirable for you to leave the student teacher in control. When the student teacher assumes full responsibility of the class, you will want to provide feedback after observing him or her teaching. However, it is also necessary for most student teachers to have the freedom to teach without another adult in the room. In these times, it is important for student teacher to know where you are in case of an emergency.
- ? How often should I have conferences with the student teacher?
- Set aside a time **at least once each week** where you can discuss performance and plan for future lessons. The ability to communicate openly and honestly leads to success for everyone in the classroom. This also helps ensure there are no surprises on the final evaluation.
- ? If the teacher across the hall is absent, should I volunteer my student teacher to serve as a substitute since I am close enough to see if problems arise?
- No! The student teacher cannot legally assume the role of substitute teacher. It is in direct violation of their student teaching certificate.
- ? If I need to contact someone at the university, other than the university supervisor, whom do I call?
- Contact Director of Teacher Education.  
Phone: (620) 235-4489, e-mail: [teachered@pittstate.edu](mailto:teachered@pittstate.edu)

# APPENDIX



# Professional Knowledge Base

**PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE**

**THE LEARNER AND LEARNING**

**Professional educators must understand that learning and development patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.**

1. The candidate knows how learning occurs (how learners construct knowledge, acquire skills and develop disciplined thinking processes) and how to use instructional strategies that promote individual growth.
2. The candidate understands that cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical development influences learning.
3. The candidate understands and identifies differences in approaches to learning and performance and designs experiences that incorporate individuals' strengths to promote growth.
4. The candidate understands students with exceptional needs and knows how to use strategies and resources to meet these needs.
5. The candidate knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate languages, experiences, cultures and community resources into practice.
6. The candidate understands how to manage the learning environment by organizing, allocating and coordinating the resources of time and space.
7. The candidate knows how to design experiences using strategies that enhance learner motivation and engagement.
8. The candidate understands the processes needed to foster a respectful learning community.

**CONTENT**

**Professional educators must have a deep and flexible understanding of the field and be able to draw upon the central concepts and structures of their discipline as they work with learners. They integrate cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and communication) to help learners apply content to propose solutions, forge new understandings, solve problems and imagine possibilities. Professional educators connect information to local, state, national and global issues.**

9. The candidate understands that learners should question, analyze and understand concepts from diverse perspectives.
10. The candidate has a deep knowledge of student content standards and learning progressions in the discipline(s).
11. The candidate knows how to use supplementary resources and technologies effectively to ensure accessibility and relevance for all.
12. The candidate understands how disciplinary knowledge can be applied as a lens to address local and global issues.
13. The candidate realizes that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated and ever evolving. S/he keeps abreast of new ideas and best practices in the field.
14. The candidate knows major concepts, assumptions and debates that are central to the discipline.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE**

**Professional educators understand and integrate assessment, planning and instructional strategies in coordinated and engaging ways for effective practice. They understand how to design, implement, interpret and communicate results from a range of assessments.**

15. The candidate knows how to engage learners in multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and skills as part of the assessment process.
16. The candidate understands the positive impact of effective descriptive feedback and knows a variety of strategies for communicating this feedback.
17. The candidate knows how to engage learners actively in the assessment process and to develop each learner's capacity to reflect on and communicate about their individual progress.
18. The candidate understands the theories and processes of curriculum design (appropriate sequencing, developmentally appropriate instruction, builds on learners' prior knowledge and experiences).
19. The candidate understands the process for aligning instruction and assessment with learning targets.
20. The candidate understands how theory, research and best practices impact ongoing planning and instructional practice.
21. The candidate knows how to engage learners in using technology tools and a range of skills to access, interpret, evaluate and apply information.
22. The candidate knows how to incorporate a variety of strategies that stimulate the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical and creative thinking, problem framing and problem solving, invention, memorization and recall).
23. The candidate knows how to apply a variety of developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning targets.
24. The candidate knows how to analyze assessment data to understand patterns and gaps in learning, to guide planning and instruction and to provide meaningful feedback.

## **PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Professional educators create and support safe, productive learning environments. They must engage in meaningful and intensive professional learning and self-renewal by regularly examining practice through ongoing study, self-reflection and collaboration. Professional educators contribute to accomplishing their school's mission and goals and demonstrate leadership by modeling ethical behavior, contributing to positive changes in practice and advancing their profession.**

25. The candidate knows how to use information and technology ethically, legally and safely.
26. The candidate understands and knows how to use a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies to analyze and reflect on his/her practice and to plan for adaptations/adjustments.
27. The candidate understands laws related to learners' rights and teacher responsibilities (e.g., IDEA, FERPA, mandated reporting, etc.).
28. The candidate understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political and social context and knows how to work with others across the system to support learners.
29. The candidate knows how to contribute to a common culture that supports high expectations for student learning.
30. The candidate understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice and relevant law and policy.  
The candidate knows how to communicate effectively with all members of the learning community.

# FIELD EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

## Rating Scale

N/A - No opportunity provided for performance, not witnessed

1 - Novice - Candidate shows awareness and beginning skills

2 - Developing - Candidate skills and awareness levels are developing

3 - Effective - Candidate consistently demonstrates competence with minimal assistance or prompting

4 - Advanced - Candidate consistently demonstrates a high degree of competence functioning independently

## A. The Learner and Learning:

- | #  | Indicator   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Plans and delivers developmentally appropriate instruction  |
| 2  | Consults a variety of sources (e.g., student records, counselors, resource specialists, parent conferences, test results, and other diagnostic tools) to determine the learning needs and capabilities of individual students |
| 3  | Differentiates instruction appropriately for specific needs of learners   |
| 4  | Persists in helping all students achieve success  |
| 5  | Designs instruction to build on learners' prior knowledge and experiences   |
| 6  | Displays consistency in dealing with behavior in the least disruptive manner, utilizing appropriate positive and negative consequences  |
| 7  | *Demonstrates positive rapport with a diverse student population  |
| 8  | Understands and respects a diverse student/parent population and helps all students learn respect for the traditions and cultures of others   |
| 9  | <i>Uses appropriate nonverbal communication</i>   |
| 10 | Provides a learning environment which includes high time-on-task and active engagement  |
| 11 | Promotes a classroom environment that is caring and supportive to all students  |
| 12 | Organizes and maintains the physical environment of the classroom in a pleasant and orderly manner conducive to student learning and safety   |
| 13 | Monitors students' behaviors and activities in the classroom at all times   |
| 14 | Handles multiple tasks, intrusions and distractions while maintaining the flow of the lesson  |
| 15 | Teaches and reinforces classroom expectations, rules, routines and procedures fairly  |

## B. Content:

- | #  | Indicator  |
|----|--|
| 16 | Demonstrates content area knowledge  |
| 17 | Effectively uses multiple representations and explanations that capture key ideas in the discipline, guides learners through learning progressions and promotes each learner's achievements of content standards |
| 18 | Engages students in learning experiences in the discipline(s) that encourage learners to understand, question and analyze ideas from diverse perspectives using standards of evidence                            |
| 19 | Creates opportunities for students to learn and practice content language  |
| 20 | Provides a real-world context for lesson content   |
| 21 | Demonstrates pedagogical knowledge relevant to the discipline  |

## C. Instructional Practice:

- | #  | Indicator  |
|----|--|
| 22 | Creates lessons that encourage students to think creatively and critically and to solve problems |

# FIELD EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

- 23 Develops clear lesson plans which include objectives, materials, activities, adaptations/modifications and evaluation techniques based on the curriculum
- 24 Develops clear long-term instruction plans (e.g., units and/or modules) which include objectives, materials, activities, adaptations/modifications and evaluation techniques based on the curriculum
- 25 Selects materials and activities consistent with the objectives of the lesson and students' diverse abilities resulting in appropriate adaptations and modifications
- 26 Applies the appropriate scope and sequence of objectives for teaching the curriculum (national, state and/or local standards)
- 27 Uses available educational technologies for effective instruction
- 28 Provides opportunities for all students to successfully apply or practice knowledge and skills learned
- 29 Designs assessments that align with learning objectives
- 30 Effectively uses multiple and appropriate types of assessment data to identify each student's learning needs and to develop differentiated learning experiences
- 31 Makes changes in instruction based on feedback from multiple classroom assessment sources
- 32 Gives constructive and frequent feedback to students on their learning
- 33 Balances the use of formative and summative assessment as appropriate to support, verify and document learning
- 34 Accomplishes smooth and orderly transitions between parts of the lesson
- 35 Communicates clearly to all students the objective and purpose of each lesson
- 36 ***\*Conducts class with poise, confidence and enthusiasm***
- 37 Maximizes instructional learning time by working with students individually as well as in small or whole groups
- 38 Gives clear directions
- 39 Provides focus on important points and checks for understanding
- 40 Uses a variety of effective and appropriate instructional strategies and resources
- 41 Encourages participation from all students through effective questioning strategies (e.g., equal distribution, level variation, adequate wait time, probing and clue giving, and appropriate correctives and feedback)
- 42 Presents lessons in a clear, logical and sequential manner

## **D. Professional Responsibility:**

- # **Indicator**
- 43 Models and teaches safe, legal and ethical use of information and technology
- 44 ***\*Demonstrates maturity and accepts constructive criticism in a positive manner***
- 45 Knows and follows school policies and shares in the general responsibilities and duties associated with teaching (e.g., attendance, discipline, hall duty)
- 46 ***Listens carefully to all students then responds in a professional manner***
- 47 Keeps abreast of new ideas and understandings in the field
- 48 ***\*Practices self-evaluation and reflection***
- 49 Maintains confidentiality at all levels
- 50 Implements the recommendations from evaluations of professional performance

# FIELD EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

- 51 \*Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills
- 52 \*Maintains a consistently positive and professional demeanor
- 53 Communicates effectively, appropriately and professionally in all forms and to all audiences

# Expectations for Professional Behavior

The information following is expectations and policies for professional behavior given to student teachers in the Professional Semester Handbook.

## Expectations for Professional Behavior

Professionalism is described as being ‘distinguished from an amateur’. As a teacher candidate, you are more than a student; you are beginning your teaching career. As a teacher candidate at PSU, you will be interacting with and teaching in school classrooms. It is important to behave professionally at all times as you are making an impression at the school and do not know who will notice and/or remember you. You will be representing PSU, your academic department, and yourself as a future teacher. ***If you choose to not follow the expectations for professional behavior, consequences could be imposed.***

### Dispositions

As you move into the role of the professional educator, be aware that there are dispositions that great teachers embody. Some of these dispositions include, but are not limited to: dependability, fairness, consistency, positive demeanor, belief in all students’ ability to learn, ethical behavior, self-evaluation and reflection, effective communication, and respect for all cultures and differences of others. These dispositions are all included in the Professional Knowledge Base and Field Evaluation Instrument (FEI). Your cooperating teacher and university supervisor will evaluate you using the FEI throughout your professional semester. Both documents are included in the appendix.

It is vital to remember that you are a guest in the classroom and the school. You are a guest of the cooperating teacher. You may disagree with a teacher’s and/or principal’s teaching or communication style but, unless someone is hurt by abusive actions, you must refrain from criticism and remain professional and polite at all times. If you have concerns or want tips on how to deal with the issue, talk with your university supervisor. **DO NOT EVER** discuss these concerns with other teachers or staff, family, friends, or on social media. Also, refrain from expressing negative perceptions about a previous experience, clinical supervisor, principal, or school. If you have concerns or information that needs to be shared, consult with your university supervisor or other appropriate College of Education staff.

### Academic Integrity

Education at the university level requires intellectual integrity and trust between faculty and students. Professors are obliged to master their subject and present as fair an account of it as possible. For their part, students are obliged to make an honest effort to fulfill both the letter and the spirit of course requirements. Academic dishonesty violates both integrity and trust. It jeopardizes the effectiveness of the educational process and the reliability of publicly reported records of achievement.

Academic dishonesty by a student is defined as unethical activity associated with course work or grades.

It includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Giving or receiving unauthorized aid on examinations,
- (b) Giving or receiving unauthorized aid in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports, papers or any other assignments,
- (c) Submitting the same work for more than one course without the instructor's permission, and,
- (d) Plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as using ideas or writings of another and claiming them as one's own. Copying any material directly (be it the work of other students, professors, or colleagues) or copying information from print or electronic sources (including the internet) without explicitly acknowledging the true source of the material is plagiarism. Plagiarism also includes paraphrasing another individuals' ideas or concepts without acknowledging their work, or contribution. To avoid charges of plagiarism, students should follow the citation directions provided by the instructor and/or department in which the class is offered.

Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, exams, quizzes, and out-of-class assignments are meant to be individual, rather than group, work. Hence, copying from other students' quizzes or exams, as well as presenting as one's own work an assignment prepared wholly or in part by another is in violation of academic honesty.

*The above is an excerpt of the university Academic Integrity policy. For the full policy, go to the online university catalog under Student Rights and Responsibilities. (<http://catalog.pittstate.edu/>)*

### Code of Student's Rights and Responsibilities

The PSU Code of Student's Rights and Responsibilities can be found at:

<http://www.pittstate.edu/audiences/current-students/policies/rights-and-responsibilities/>

### Confidentiality

Confidentiality in all situations is required. Professional discussions may give you access to student and/or school information. It is important that this information be used with integrity in a professional manner and remain confidential. In other words, do not talk about the students, teachers, or administrators from your cooperating school(s), particularly in any public forum including, but not limited to, restaurants, social media, electronic communication, and the teachers' lounge. Candidates must adhere to Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) guidelines at all times.

### Student Teacher as a Substitute

Kansas state regulation (KSDE 91-19-6 e) and Pittsburg State University College of Education policy do not allow student teachers to fill any position except for those duties designated within the Student Teaching Certificate issued by the Office of Teacher Education in conjunction with KSDE. It is imperative that student teachers not be placed in a situation that is contrary to state regulations or puts the school and student teacher in a liable situation. The regulation states “certified student teachers shall be prohibited from serving as regular or substitute teachers in Kansas-accredited or Kansas-approved educational agencies.”

Note: This does not mean that you cannot be left alone in your classroom and/or with your students for periods of time.

## Attendance

An important aspect of professional behavior is time management. You are expected to be at the school during your scheduled times. If you are ill or have an emergency, contact your cooperating teacher and your university supervisor to report your absence. Any extracurricular activities, including employment, should not interfere with your scheduled time for your field placement.

### Excused Absences from Campus Seminars

1. Weather: snow, ice, flood (if roads are closed)
2. Death of immediate family member
3. Illness – Self or others in immediate family – Doctor excuse required
4. Court appearances/jury duty
5. Participation in university activities if member of a team or group (track meets, concert tours, etc.)
6. National conferences if approved by the cooperating teacher, university supervisor and Director of Teacher Education

### Teacher Education

\*MAY NOT MISS CAMPUS SEMINARS for parent/teacher conferences, field trips, or other school functions

### Procedures to Follow if Campus Seminar Must Be Missed

1. Contact your university supervisor before 8:45 a.m. via their preferred method of contact.
2. If you do not reach the supervisor, provide contact information where you can be reached.
3. Failure to comply with this policy will result in a consequence determined by the Director of Teacher Education.

### Excused Absences from School

1. Death of immediate family member
2. Illness – Self or others in immediate family – Doctor excuse required
3. Court appearances/jury duty
4. Participation in university activities (same as above)
5. National conferences if approved by cooperating teacher, university supervisor and Director of Teacher Education

### Procedure to Follow if School Must Be Missed

1. Notify the cooperating teacher as early as possible.
2. Call the school office.
3. Notify your university supervisor via their preferred method of contact.

If more than 5 days of absence (excused or unexcused) are accumulated, a consequence determined by the Director of Teacher Education will result.

**Failure to comply with the above procedures will put your professional semester completion in jeopardy.**

## Professional Use of Technology

Appropriate use of technology is another important factor of professional behavior. Due to the fact that you will be interacting with children who will be curious about you, you must make good, professional choices about the content of personal webpages and social media accounts. By choosing the field of education, you have placed yourself in the public eye. Therefore, awareness of your public persona is important. You should expect a degree of public scrutiny. With this in mind, some basic guidelines have been provided for you.

### *Social media and personal webpages*

- Be aware of your online image and the perception it may give to others (including potential employers).
- Check photos (even the backgrounds) to make sure that all content is appropriate. This includes pictures of yourself that may be posted by others.
- Remember you have a right to privacy; you should exercise this right. Use the privacy settings available to you.
- The students in your assigned classroom (or school) are NOT your friends; do not initiate or confirm any friend requests on Facebook, do not allow students to “follow” you on Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
- Do NOT post or blog about your cooperating teacher, students, and/or school.
- Do NOT use Facebook or other social media during school hours.

### *Email*

- Do NOT give students or parents your private email address. You should consider creating a separate email address for your professional interactions.
- Do NOT use inappropriate email tags (i.e., sexybaby@hotmail.com).

### *Phones*

- Students should NOT be provided your personal phone number.
- Do NOT use your phone during school visits (texting, internet browsing, using apps, etc.).
- Do NOT take any pictures with your phone while in a school or at a school-related event.

## Dress Code

Your manner of dress will need to reflect appropriateness for your chosen profession. You are being provided with guidelines that will assist your success in the classroom. Remember that there are body parts that should never show (both front and back). Also, undergarments should be worn *under* your clothing. After dressing in the morning, stand in front of your mirror and bend over, squat, raise your arms and bend forward from the waist. If those particular body parts remain covered during this movement, your clothing is likely appropriate. You also need to beware of clothing that clings inappropriately. If there is any doubt, DO NOT WEAR IT! It is better to be safe than sorry!

### *Professional clothing generally includes:*

#### **Men**

Dress slacks, Casual dress slacks (khaki or twill) Dress shirts, ties, collared polo shirts Sweaters, vests, jackets, Dress and casual shoes

#### **Women**

Dress slacks, Casual dress slacks (khaki or twill) Dresses, skirts, Blouses, Sweaters, vests, jackets, Dress and casual shoes

#### **Do Not Wear:**

- Any footwear that may interfere with performing your job, such as flip-flops or high heels
- Denim jeans (jeans of any color or style) unless the school has a special occasion or celebration that calls for wearing jeans
- Shorts of any type (exceptions for Physical Education majors)
- T-shirts (especially with logos)
- Clothing with potentially offensive phrases, political statements, religious statements, or inappropriate advertising
- Shirts (low-cut, short-waisted, or sleeveless) that reveal too much skin, underwear, or tattoos
- Athletic clothes (sweatshirts, hoodies, jogging suits)
- Sagging pants worn low or pants cut with a “low rise” that reveal underwear or too much skin
- Faded, unclean, or wrinkled clothing
- Leggings, tights, and yoga pants; these are not appropriate to be worn as pants

#### **Grooming and Hygiene Basics:**

- Regular bathing/showering and deodorant should be used to eliminate body odor.
- Wash and brush your hair regularly.
- Proper dental hygiene should be practiced.
- Hair, beards, and mustaches should be neatly trimmed and clean (or removed if not in accordance with school policies).
- Cologne or perfume, if used at all, should be subtle.
- Body piercing, other than earrings, should be unnoticeable.
- Fingernails should be trimmed and clean.
- Beware of smoking or pet odors.

## **Professional Responsibilities**

Teacher candidates are expected to observe and adhere to the professional requirements for educators. Candidates need to be familiar with each of the following in order to uphold policies and legal requirements for educators. Full documents for each can be found in the Appendix of this handbook.

### **Kansas Educator Code of Conduct**

[http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/TLA/Licensure/KS\\_Ed\\_Code\\_Conduct\\_Brochure031014.pdf](http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/TLA/Licensure/KS_Ed_Code_Conduct_Brochure031014.pdf)

The professional educator shall work in the best interest of their students and honor their responsibilities to their students, school, district, community, state, and profession as evidence by:

- Responsibilities to Student
- Responsibilities to District
- Responsibilities to Profession

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Student records and information are protected under this federal law. Teachers must be aware of the requirements in order to appropriately maintain required confidentiality.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**

<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/pps/pages/reportchildabuseandneglect.aspx>

All teachers, school administrators, or other employees of an educational institution are mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect under the Kansas reporting law (K.S.A. 38-2223). Teacher candidates must be aware of their legal responsibility and the required steps to make such a report.

# **Optional Tools for Informal Observation**

## **Anecdotal observation**

**Student engagement:**

**Curriculum:**

**Instructional Strategies:**

## Observation Process

1. Student Engagement: Are the students engaged?
  - Does student behavior appear to be in place?
  - Are they engaged in work? Are they on task?
  
2. Curriculum: What is being taught?
  - Try to discern the objective(s) being taught
  - Answer the question- What is the content of the student learning?
  - Focus on the curriculum, looking past just the instructional practice.
  - At some point you need to answer this question—Is the taught curriculum aligned with the proscribed district curriculum?
  
3. Instructional Strategies: How is instruction being presented?
  - Identify the generic teaching practices that are taking place.
  - Are a variety of strategies being used?
  - How is the teacher engaging the students?
  - Is the teaching style “teacher centered” or “student centered”?
  - Identify strategies being used in the implementation of a school or district initiative (e.g., writing project, literacy first, etc.).
  - Observe for subject area specific teaching practices (i.e., manipulatives, etc.).

## Focused Observation Guide

Focus:

Observations:

<b>Teacher Behaviors/Instructional Practices</b>	<b>Teacher Behaviors/Instructional Practices</b>
<b>Evidence in support of the focus and which reinforces student learning</b>	<b>Evidence missing or evidence which does not support the focus and student learning</b>
<b>Your response</b>	<b>Your response</b>
Student Behaviors/Learning Outcomes/Results	Student Behaviors/Learning Outcomes/Results
<b>Evidence in support of the focus</b>	<b>Evidence missing or does not support the focus</b>
<b>Your response</b>	<b>Your response</b>

## Cooperating Teacher Informal Observation of Student Teacher

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY OBSERVED:

STRONG POINT(S) OF THE LESSON:

SUGGESTION(S) FOR IMPROVEMENT:

1=STRONGLY AGREE

2=AGREE

3=DISAGREE

4= STRONGLY DISAGREE

N/A=NOT APPLICABLE

THE LESSON WAS WELL PLANNED	1	2	3	4	N/A
USED CLASS TIME EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY	1	2	3	4	N/A
DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS HANDLED APPROPRIATELY	1	2	3	4	N/A
DEMONSTRATES PROFESSIONALISM AND WORKS WELL WITH COLLEAGUES, STAFF AND STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	N/A
THERE IS A NEED FOR A THREE-WAY CONFERENCE	1	2	3	4	N/A

COMMENTS:

## Teacher Candidate Lesson Self-Reflection (Completed by Student Teacher)

Student Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperating Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the observed lesson and what I did to promote learning:

How did the students demonstrate their understanding of the lesson's objectives?

What I did well:

What I need to work on:

After discussing with the cooperating teacher; what changes will you make the next time you teach?

# Mentoring Article from Educational Leadership

## Learning and Teaching for the Long Haul

Amy Baeder

If you think teacher candidates are in a difficult position, then consider the charge of teacher educators: Not only must they help novice teachers survive their practicum, but they must also set them up to be effective for the rest of their teaching careers.

Keeping in mind that the 200,000 future teachers who enroll in teacher education programs every year typically want to know how to be most effective in the classroom the very next day, teacher educators might best support preservice teachers by giving them a vision for the long haul.

Short-sightedness in adult learning is common. "Often, adult learners' immediate focus is on practical, short-term objectives," contends transformative learning expert Jack Mezirow (1997, p. 8). "It is crucial to recognize that learning needs must be defined so as to recognize both short-term objectives and long-term goals." Transformative learning, Mezirow's theory on adult learning, "refers to learning that results in a deep change of beliefs, assumptions, or perspectives, making people more discriminating and able to construct opinions that will prove more true to guide their actions" (Ginsberg, 2011, p. 10).

If universities and partner schools engage in a transformative learning cycle with preservice teachers, then they can show neophytes how to serve students tomorrow *and* equip them to make sound instructional choices for years to come. Toward that end, here's what teacher educators can do.

### Help Teacher Candidates Build Relationships, But Encourage Productive Conflict

Teacher candidates must have solid relationships to feel safe in taking risks and challenging the ideas of others.

Teacher educators can foster relationships with and among novice teachers by helping preservice programs create norms for classroom interactions, watching videos of one another teach, and sharing and analyzing the schoolwork of candidates' students. Teacher educators can also create routines in which candidates share challenges and celebrations at the beginning of class and build in time for candidates to connect one-on-one about their practice.

One challenge is to provide supportive interactions that can also inspire the candidate to improve; sugar-coating feedback can sometimes obscure the message to preservice teachers, and remaining comfortable is not transformative (Taylor, 2007).

### Access Candidates' Prior Knowledge and Beliefs

What do candidates already know and believe? Are they ready for change? If not, what will it take to get them there? These crucial questions must be answered before teacher educators present new information or ideas to candidates.

Disposition surveys, entry interviews, warm-up questions at the beginning of each class, reflective journals, and whole-class share-outs can reveal how candidates approach ideas, concepts, challenges, and teaching practice. Educators can use this information to design learning experiences and choose instructional materials that reflect the experiences of the candidates and enhance their buy-in.

### Introduce a Catalyst to Improve Their Practice

Maybe the catalyst is a new framework for planning lessons. Perhaps it is an article, a question, data on students' performance, or an observation. Whatever the catalyst is, it is a critical component of transformative learning, because it primes candidates to change.

Teacher educators and teacher education programs can build in experiences that shift the way teacher candidates approach their work, such as conducting a home visit to uncover families' strengths (Baeder, 2010; Ginsberg, 2007), organizing a lesson study for candidates (Lewis, 2002), or encouraging a candidate to shadow a student throughout the school day (Farris, 2011). These experiences could result in the candidate coming to an understanding of the student, of their pedagogy, or of families that would not have occurred otherwise.

At the very least, this catalyst will prompt discomfort, which is critical for transformative learning. Mezirow (1997) states, "We do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference" (p. 7).

## **Directly Teach and Model Skills**

Instructors should provide model lessons that feature the strategies they want candidates to use with students. It's unfair to expect candidates to enact a skill that they have not seen or experienced in their programs.

Preservice teachers need to see the type of instruction asked of them and experience what their students will experience. Adult learners need "explicit guidance, instrumental instruction, and institutional support to enact dialogic teaching in their practice" (Taylor, 2007, p. 181).

Mentor teachers can also take part in candidates' learning processes through narrating their instructional choices while planning, modeling instructional strategies, and comparing and discussing assessment techniques.

## **Give Candidates the Opportunity to Try New Skills**

Learning about or experiencing strategies is not enough. Candidates need to try their newly learned skills in safe settings, taking small steps in their classroom and sometimes approximating practice by teaching each other.

One example of this is microteaching, a technique used by candidates in the University of Washington teacher education program. In their methods courses, candidates try out their recently acquired strategies in 20-minute teaching segments before a small group of peers.

During student teaching, university supervisors and mentor teachers can provide focused coaching on short segments of the candidate teacher's instruction addressing recently learned skills. These small steps, if well-supported, can result in large strides in a new teacher's practice in the long term.

## **Promote Critical Reflection and Discourse**

Dialogue and reflection are important for processing thoughts. This is true for students, teacher candidates, and other adult learners. Mezirow posits that "self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformation" (1997, p. 7) and that discourse is "central to making meaning" (1997, p. 10).

This type of meaning-making is at the heart of learner-centered, participatory adult education. Teacher educators can build in discourse through familiar methods, such as turn and talks (impromptu peer sharing), dialogue partners, table groups, journal partners, and discussion protocols. Candidates could keep a learning journal; respond to reflection prompts at the end of each

class; or try innovative methods of reflection using social media, tablet devices, smartphones, and video. The method of reflection and discourse is less important than the fact that candidates participate in both.

Transformative learning will change the actions and perspectives of the teacher candidates who are exposed to it. By heightening their own awareness of their long-term influence, teacher educators can embed a series of transformative experiences in their work with candidates that will allow new teachers to continue to reap the benefits many years down the road.

Teacher educators must not simply prepare candidates with strategies for their lessons tomorrow. They must also empower them to know students well; understand their content deeply; and teach in engaging, rigorous ways that lead to student success for years to come.

## References

- Baeder, A. (2010, February). Stepping into students' worlds. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 56–60.
- Farris, S. (2011, October). In Yasir's shoes: A principal gains insight by shadowing an English language learner student. *Journal of Staff Development*, 32 (5), 20–23, 37.
- Ginsberg, M. (2007). Lessons at the kitchen table. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 56–61.
- Ginsberg, M. (2011). *Transformative professional learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Lewis, C. C. (2002). *Lesson study: A handbook of teacher-led instructional change*. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools, Inc.
- Mezirow, J. (1997, September 6). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5–12.
- Taylor, E. W. (2007, March 1). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), 173–191.

Amy Baeder works as a teacher educator at the University of Washington and is a doctoral candidate in educational leadership and policy studies.

ASCD Express, Vol. 7, No. 10. Copyright 2012 by ASCD. All rights reserved. Visit [www.ascd.org/ascdexpress](http://www.ascd.org/ascdexpress).

Supporting Preservice Teachers  
February 16, 2012 | Volume 7 | Issue 10  
[Table of Contents](#)

## The Benefits of Asking "How Can I Improve This Lesson?"

Alice Kramer

In my preservice lesson plan reviews, the first question to be answered at the end of the teaching day was always, "How could I improve this lesson?" Knowing I would have to answer that question to the satisfaction of my professors made me very conscious of my teaching and my students' response to it. At the time, I didn't realize that my daily reply to that question would become one of the most useful ways for me to monitor my effectiveness as a teacher.

As a preservice teacher, the dual responsibilities of lesson planning and classroom management were sometimes overwhelming. Lesson plans had to be very detailed. For most subjects, that meant each day's lesson plan was three pages long with step-by-step instructions for implementing the lesson. We were expected to use our lesson plan as a script to ensure that we did not forget any elements of the lesson.

Monitoring student response, assessing their understanding, and pacing my lesson did not come easily for me. So thinking about ways to improve my lessons became the most useful part of my reflection because it forced me to think about teaching and learning from both the teacher's and the students' perspective.

Reflection helped me devise better ways to engage students in the subject matter, and my pacing even improved. I became more acclimated to my students' personalities and their response to my lessons. That key question "How could I improve this lesson?" gave me the impetus to continually monitor my teaching and adjust my lessons to suit the needs of my students.

## Journaling a Professional Dialogue

Preservice teachers in my program were also required to keep a journal, a daily log of our thoughts and concerns about the art and science of teaching. My journal served to reinforce and extend my thoughts about improving my lessons. I also benefited from involving my supervising teacher, who also made entries in the journal.

At the beginning of the day, I would hand my journal to her, and while I taught, she logged comments on my teaching and students' response, or she might point out off-task behavior that I missed and suggest ways to deal with it. Many of her entries suggested ways to improve specific sections of my lesson. She included compliments as well.

If I had chance at the end of the school day, I would read her entries and, if necessary, talk to her directly about her comments. Then, after taking time to unwind at home, I would write in my own reflection. I responded to her comments and usually had at least one question I wanted to ask her about my students' reaction to my lesson. The next day she would write her answer to my question in the journal and begin her comments on that day's teaching.

The journal became a dialogue between novice and mentor teachers that increased our communication. It was difficult for us to find time to talk about teaching during the school day, so the journal gave us that opportunity to gather our thoughts and put them in writing. At the end of each week, I would look over our entries, which allowed me to see my progress and reminded me of what I needed to do to improve my teaching.

My initial answers to the review question, "How could I improve this lesson?" were the stepping stones to more in-depth analysis of my teaching that my journal provided. Both exercises helped me see the importance of continuously analyzing my teaching and adjusting lessons to suit the unique mix of students in my classroom.

As a substitute teacher by choice, it gives me confidence in my ability to adapt my instruction to various groups of students in each class. Because of that preservice requirement to reflect on my teaching, I continue to ask, "How could I improve this lesson?"

[Alice Kramer](#) graduated from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania in 2009 with a degree in elementary education and works as a substitute teacher in the Blue Mountain and the Schuylkill Haven Area school districts in Pennsylvania.

*ASCD Express*, Vol. 7, No. 10. Copyright 2012 by ASCD. All rights reserved. Visit [www.ascd.org/ascdexpress](http://www.ascd.org/ascdexpress).

# Professional Relationships Influence Preservice Teacher Success

*Tracy L. Durksen and Robert M. Klassen*

Preservice teachers typically enter a school placement with enthusiasm to influence the lives of their students, but they soon find themselves facing psychological and social demands from students, mentor teachers, and university supervisors in a challenging work environment. Indeed, the teaching practicum is rated as the most stressful experience during teacher preparation (Chaplain, 2008).

For preservice teachers, success in teaching is closely linked to the quality of the key relationships that define their practicum (Bloomfield, 2010). A sense of belonging or relatedness can positively influence teachers' engagement and commitment to the profession (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, in press). On the other hand, problems with key relationships can result in emotional and professional withdrawal.

Any attempt to understand preservice teachers' practicum success and overall well-being must include a study of their professional relationships.

## Research in Preservice Teacher Development

Our research program at the University of Alberta explores the motivational and emotional characteristics of preservice teachers as they make the transition from student to teacher and then traces how motivations and emotions develop over time for practicing teachers. We pay particular attention to teachers' motivation and emotions as key markers of teacher engagement and well-being. Using a longitudinal approach combined with quantitative and qualitative data collection allows us to examine overall trends and patterns in teachers' professional trajectories and to drill down to look at specific instances that illustrate participants' own perspectives on their teaching experiences.

The key factors we measure in preservice teacher development are

- **Self-efficacy and stress.** Self-efficacy—beliefs in the capacity to influence student learning—has been shown to reduce the effect of classroom stress in preservice and practicing teachers (Klassen & Chiu, 2011).
- **Engagement.** Teaching engagement reflects the level of energy and dedication with which a teacher addresses daily work.
- **Commitment to the profession.** Occupational commitment refers to longer-term decisions about teaching as a career.

## Four Key Findings from Recent Research

We recently completed a mixed-methods longitudinal study that followed final-year preservice teachers as they progressed through their nine-week final practicum. Our sample consisted of three cohorts of preservice teachers in elementary and secondary schools (150 participants; 77 percent female) who completed weekly electronic reports about their practicum experiences.

In addition to numerical responses to valid measures of self-efficacy, stress, engagement, and commitment to the profession, participants also responded to open-ended questions about their practicum experiences. Here we highlight four key findings emerging from our research and provide illustrative quotes from participants.

First, we found that most preservice teachers showed a typical pattern of measurable weekly increases in self-efficacy and weekly decreases in stress over the practicum. This result matched our predictions: we expected that most preservice teachers would report increases in confidence and decreases in stress.

However, numerous preservice teachers also showed atypical patterns, with decreasing self-efficacy over time and increasing stress throughout the practicum. When we examined these atypical cases more closely, we saw how the relationship with mentor teachers helped or hindered development. Participants said, "My mentor teacher models numerous effective assessment strategies on a consistent basis, and I have learned a lot from her in this capacity" versus "My [mentor teacher] often thwarts my attempts to assess effectively ... I don't know if my instructional strategies are effective."

Second, we identified four types of changes associated with key relationships:

- independent change. Positive, which focuses on positive
- with support from the mentor. Assisted, which focuses on change
- hindrance from key relationships. Hindered, which focuses on
- Professional withdrawal.

The results highlighted the crucial importance of supportive relationships with mentor teachers, but they also raised the uncomfortable finding that for a significant group of preservice teachers, the relationship with mentor teachers was among the top stressors that adversely influenced their levels of motivation and well-being.

Third, we found that most preservice teachers showed a *U*-shaped pattern of engagement and commitment over the practicum. Initially high engagement and commitment was followed by a sharp drop. The drop is associated with the reality shock of the classroom and a subsequent rebound, eventually finishing at a higher level than at the beginning. One participant said, "The feedback from my mentor teacher and others around me tells me I'm doing an awesome job."

Our fourth finding, however, was that a minority, about 4 percent of preservice teachers, showed a conspicuous decline in commitment and engagement during the practicum. The relationship with mentor teachers was a crucial influence on engagement and commitment. "My experience with my mentor teacher has drained both my motivation for the profession and for the day," according to one participant.

## Implications

Past studies (e.g., Chaplain, 2008) have emphasized that being paired with a supportive mentor teacher is a decisive factor influencing preservice teachers' work stress but is perceived by preservice teachers as a matter of luck. In our study, preservice teachers emphasized the importance of mentor teachers through several factors.

A positive practicum experience, as expressed by preservice teachers, involved supportive mentor teachers who modeled effective assessment and management strategies, created a collaborative practicum environment (e.g., working together on unit and lesson planning), provided several opportunities for practice and success (e.g., increasing preservice teachers' responsibilities in the classroom) and offered constructive feedback (as opposed to demotivating feedback, e.g., ... "being told my lesson plans are fluff").

Increased attention to careful, purposeful selection of experienced teachers for the role of mentor would go far in increasing preservice teachers' self-efficacy and well-being during the practicum, and it may also influence their long-term engagement and commitment to the profession. We recommend that partnerships between teacher education programs and school districts

much more strongly emphasize selecting the best mentor teachers possible, with an additional focus on building mentorship skills of prospective mentor teachers through targeted professional development and training.

## References

Bloomfield, D. (2010). Emotions and 'getting by': A pre-service teacher navigating professional experience. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 38, 221–234. doi: 10.1080/1359866X.2010.494005

Chaplain, R. P. (2008). Stress and psychological distress among trainee secondary teachers in England. *Educational Psychology*, 28, 195–209.

Klassen, R. M., & Chiu, M. M. (2011). The occupational commitment and intention to quit of practicing and pre-service teachers: Influence of self-efficacy, job stress, and teaching context. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36, 114–129.

Klassen, R. M., Perry, N. E., & Frenzel, A. C. (in press). Teachers relatedness with students: An underemphasized component of teachers' basic psychological needs. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. doi: 10.1037/a0026253

Tracy L. Durksen is a doctoral candidate and Robert M. Klassen is an associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

ASCD Express, Vol. 7, No. 10. Copyright 2012 by ASCD. All rights reserved. Visit [www.ascd.org/ascdexpress](http://www.ascd.org/ascdexpress).