

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER

The role of the cooperating teacher is vital in the development of a student teacher. You will help facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the student teacher so that he/she will experience professional growth.

COMPONENTS OF DAILY OBSERVATION

Observing the student teacher's instructional performance is critical for his/her professional development.

It is important that the student teacher be provided with specific, objective feedback.

- Observations include:
 - Review and assessment of lesson plans
 - Observations and documentation of the actual lesson
 - Identify areas of instructional strengths and identify specific areas for refinement.
 - Identify strategies to improve area(s) for refinement.
- Professional dispositions:
 - Interaction with students, colleagues and administrators

VISITATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS BY THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

- The observation and discussion should not be a disruption to the class. The plans for the day should remain the same.
- Visits and observations of student teachers occur at least five times during the student teaching experience. More visits/observations may be required if the student teacher is experiencing difficulty.
- The initial visit should occur during the first two weeks of the student teaching experience.
- An observation should occur prior to the mid-term evaluation.
- Two observations should be scheduled when the student teacher assumes full responsibility for the classroom prior to the final evaluation.
- The final observation should occur shortly before the final evaluation.
- The University supervisor should confer with the cooperating teacher in evaluating student teachers and composing the narrative section of the final evaluation.

LEAVING THE CLASSROOM – “SOLO” TEACHING

- Student teachers should be regarded as pre-service teachers assigned to the classroom to gain valuable practical experience. This is their opportunity to begin developing into a teaching professional. There should be opportunities to observe, plan, teach and discuss lessons with the cooperating teacher. As the student teacher gains more confidence the long range plan should include “solo” teaching so that he/she experiences managing a classroom independently. The cooperating teacher retains the responsibility for the classroom, students and the student teacher and, therefore, should be available (in close proximity).

COMMUNICATION

- Keeping the lines of communication open is one of the key components of a successful student teaching experience. The student teacher and cooperating teacher should develop a system/plan for daily communication. The cooperating teacher, student teacher and University supervisor should keep in touch through one-on-one visits, email, phone calls, etc. If concerns arise that need resolving, please contact the University supervisor immediately. He/she will then determine whether the Coordinator of Student Teaching should be involved. If there should be a concern regarding the University supervisor, please call the Coordinator. We are here to help resolve situations before they become bigger issues.
- The student teacher will be looking for help with short and long term planning, suggestions on classroom management, as well as observation of teaching and constructive feedback. It is important to schedule daily time to talk about how things are going.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES SPECIFIC TO PROGRAM AREA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: *What if my student teacher is failing or not performing to expectations?*

A: Occasionally, student teachers experience serious difficulties during their assignments. Generally, the difficulties present themselves early in the experience. IT IS CRITICAL to address the problem or potential problem as soon as it arises.

It is important for the student teacher and cooperating teacher to discuss the problem and determine the resolution together as professionals. The University supervisor needs to be made aware of the situation, even if he or she is not brought into the initial problem-solving meeting. The University supervisor will keep the Coordinator of Student Teaching informed.

For some student teachers, one meeting with the cooperating teacher will not correct the problem, and more serious intervention will be needed. In addition to the cooperating teacher, the University supervisor, the building principal and/or assistant principal, and the Coordinator of Student Teaching are involved in remediation. Situations are dealt with individually, but often, a professional development plan is employed. A conference including the student teacher, cooperating teacher, University supervisor, and Coordinator of Student Teaching should be arranged to develop an appropriate plan. Building administration should join in if they wish or the situation warrants. Regardless, the input of administration should be sought.

The most important factor is early intervention.

Q: *What can be done about student teachers with glaring educational problems, such as an inability to use standard written and oral language?*

A: Any problem, but particularly a communication problem, needs to be addressed early and thoroughly. Student teachers, like all teachers in the field, are responsible for so much more than content, and they need to be aware that all they do and say is open to scrutiny by many people outside the classroom as well as in it.

Point out the specific issue(s) promptly and explain the necessity of correction. Provide strategies for correcting the problem, even if it means the student teacher has to do some "homework" to refresh his or her own knowledge and practice. Most student teachers will see the importance of correcting the problem and will likely possess the desire and motivation to fix the problem on their own.

The problem(s) should also be pointed out to the University supervisor. The situation is part of the student teacher's professional development, thus the University supervisor should be made aware, but he or she may also be able to help the student teacher find a way to correct the particular issue.

If the problem is not corrected or attempts are not made, this should be noted. Teachers in the field are held accountable for such areas; student teachers should be as well.