Guiding Student Teachers Handbook

A Manual for Supervising Student Teachers at The University of Texas at Austin

Education Services, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin

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Section I: Mission and Diversity Statements

Field Experiences Mission Statement for The University of Texas Teacher Preparation Programs

Field Experiences at The University of Texas at Austin are an integral component of our teacher preparation programs, built on strong collaboration between school districts and colleges of the University. Our future teachers engage in purposefully crafted field experiences that cultivate depth of knowledge, research-based practices, and professional ethics. These experiences are designed to be sequential, cumulative, and performance-based, while preparing our graduates to implement and evaluate effective practices with diverse student populations in varied settings. As a result, teachers prepared at the University will master subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, work collaboratively with all stakeholders, develop dispositions to be active citizens, and offer their students the opportunity to develop these characteristics themselves.

The following attributes are considered when selecting cooperating teachers for field placements:

Cooperating Teacher Characteristics for Quality Field Placements

(Originating from the Cooperating Teacher Agreement Form)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective: In order to provide supportive classroom environments for preparing preservice teachers, cooperating teachers should strive to exhibit the following characteristics:</th>
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<td>1. Teacher Performance</td>
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<td>• Performs at the top levels of the district teacher appraisal</td>
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<td>2. Professionalism</td>
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<td>• Demonstrates behaviors that reflect commitment to ethical concerns</td>
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<td>• Exhibits enthusiasm, flexibility and open-mindedness</td>
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<td>• Teacher participates regularly in professional development about approaches to teaching and updates practices based on new knowledge.</td>
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<th>3. Mentoring Skills</th>
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<td>• Models and encourages self-reflective practices</td>
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<td>• Promotes a collaborative and non-threatening environment where mistakes are the building blocks of learning</td>
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<td>• Provides constructive feedback and praise</td>
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<td>• Communicates effectively</td>
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<td>• Receptive to new ideas and practices</td>
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<th>4. Diversity</th>
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<td>• The cooperating teachers' actions are respectful of the numerous diversities within the school population and community (e.g., culture and language, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, physical and personal attributes and disabilities)</td>
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<td>• Actively promotes student appreciation of diverse groups and cultures through curricula and instructional activities</td>
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<td>• Utilizes culturally and linguistically responsive strategies and techniques to address the needs of diverse learners</td>
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<th>5. Special Populations and Inclusive Settings</th>
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<td>• Collects and shares student information in order to plan and implement differentiated curricula and instruction</td>
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• Demonstrates knowledge of federal, state and local policies/procedures

• Demonstrates knowledge of instructional strategies for all special populations served in the classrooms
  • Works collaboratively with family members, and other support personnel to appropriately identify and address students’ individual needs

6. Technology

• Is supportive of an interactive, technology-rich teaching/learning environment

7. Student Outcomes

• Demonstrates an ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of each and every student
  • Continuously monitors student achievement and efficacy of instruction
  • Uses student data to effectively plan and implement best-practice interventions.

Texas school-district personnel and University of Texas faculty collaboratively developed these recommendations.

Commitment to Diversity

Teachers graduating from our programs will join the existing force of educators who have the dispositions and skills needed to be highly qualified and effective teachers of students from racial, ethnic, linguistic, or socioeconomic groups currently under-served by the education system. Our graduates will have the ability and commitment to recognize and respond to individual needs and differences, in order to support student success in school and life.

Section II: University Field Supervisors of Student Teachers

The following section contains excerpts from the “Student Teaching Handbook” which is given to each student teacher at The University of Texas at Austin.

INTRODUCTION

Student teaching is one of the most rewarding experiences in your professional development as a teacher. Without a doubt, it will be a challenging experience that will provide you with many opportunities to develop your skills. Everyone associated with the program is committed to helping you become as fine a teacher as your capabilities and dedication allow. One of the first ways you can help insure a satisfactory experience for yourself is to read this handbook carefully and follow the advice given. Nothing is included in this handbook that does not directly affect the success of your student teaching experience, so please be sure you are familiar with the contents.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Each person, including yourself, involved in the student teaching program has certain responsibilities. You have every right to expect certain things from both your cooperating teacher and university field supervisor. If you think your cooperating teacher or university field supervisor is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities, contact Dr. Sharon H. Evans, Director of Field Experiences, SZB 244. Your concerns will be kept confidential.

It is rare that the people working with student teachers do not meet all of their responsibilities. In general, these people will be highly professional and competent. In the rare cases that this is not true, it is important that you let someone know so that the situation can be corrected as soon as possible. Do not wait until the end of the semester to seek assistance with a lingering problem or misunderstanding.

Responsibilities of Student Teacher

1. Recognize and accept that the cooperating teacher has the ultimate responsibility for what you may or may not do in the classroom.
Responsibilities of Cooperating Teacher

1. Accept the student teacher as a professional. Introduce the student teacher to the class on the first day of attendance.
2. Acquaint the student teacher with materials and resources available in the school on the first day or soon thereafter.
3. Allow the student teacher to assume responsibilities as the student teacher exhibits the readiness to do so.
4. Encourage the student teacher to be creative and try new teaching strategies.
5. Require lesson plans from the student teacher in advance of the teaching assignments.
6. Observe the student teacher teaching on a regular basis and provide a written copy of the observation to both the student teacher and university field supervisor.
7. Conduct regular cooperative planning sessions with the student teacher. There should be one session at the beginning of the semester followed by weekly and/or daily sessions.
8. Complete two student teaching evaluation forms, the Formative Assessment at mid-semester and the Summative Assessment at the end of the semester, and discuss each evaluation with the student teacher. At mid-semester, concrete suggestions for improvement should be identified and then communicated in writing to all parties involved.
9. Conduct an individual feedback session for each observation made and provide the student teacher and cooperating teacher with a written summary of the results.
10. Help any individual student teacher with any problems that may arise in the student teaching assignment. If problems warrant the attention of the university field supervisor, call 471-1511 anytime during office hours.

Responsibilities of University Field Supervisor

1. Provide an orientation meeting for all student teachers under his or her supervision. Provide an orientation for Cooperating Teachers (read and distribute Guiding Student Teachers handbook: https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/COEfieldexperiences/Guiding+Student+Teachers+Handbook).
2. Help in the placement of student teachers as specified by the Director of Education Services or the UT coordinator.
3. Conduct weekly seminars for his or her assigned student teachers.
4. Observe each student teacher on a regular basis and provide the student teacher and cooperating teacher with a written account of the observation. Elementary student teaching university field supervisors generally visit the student teacher once a week (minimum of 5 visits); secondary university field supervisors usually visit 5-7 times during the semester (in some cases, more observations are needed).
5. Conduct an individual feedback session for each observation made and provide the student teacher and cooperating teacher with a written summary of the results.
6. Help any individual student teacher with any problems that may arise in the student teaching assignment. If problems warrant the attention of the Director of Education Services, call 471-1511 anytime during office hours.
7. Provide guidance to both the student teacher and cooperating teacher with respect to the pacing of experiences.
8. Conduct a three-way mid-term and final three-way conference with the cooperating teacher and student teacher to discuss the evaluation of the student teacher.
9. Keep a file of written memos, announcements, and all communication pertaining to the responsibilities of a university field supervisor. Even though the university field supervisor may spend a great deal of time in the schools, check your mail often or have a friend do it for you. The university field supervisor must be available for communications and meet deadlines.
10. Communicate with your coordinator on a regular basis to ensure that you are both up-to-date on your student teacher’s progress in the schools.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Your student teaching assignment has been made with much care and attention to many factors. Adjustments in assignments are not made after student teaching begins except for unusual circumstances. Occasionally, some incompatibility may arise, thus interfering with your learning. If this should occur, please notify your university field supervisor at once.

It is important for you to recognize that you are a guest in the school, and that your cooperating teacher bears the responsibility of determining what is best for the teacher’s students. The classroom teacher’s decision about what you may or may not do is final. Be patient. If you demonstrate competence, responsibility, and tact, you will likely have many opportunities to try innovative teaching strategies. If you have any problems, be sure to inform your university field supervisor as soon as possible.

PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY

As a student teacher, you are entitled to the same protection of law accorded to the cooperating teacher and the principal in the school where you are assigned. This protection does not apply in cases where there is use of excessive force in the discipline of students or negligence resulting in bodily injury to students. Nor does the protection apply to the operation or use of any motor vehicle.
The University has not provided you with liability insurance and you may want to look into insurance coverage offered by organizations such as ATPE, TCTA, and other professional teacher organizations. This means that in the weeks before Total Teach, you should not be left alone on a regular basis with your class for extended periods of time. In addition, you should not be left alone on a playground or field trip with a group of students without a licensed teacher within “shouting distance.” These rules are for your own protection and it is important that you alert your university field supervisor immediately if they are being violated.

If you have been approved as a substitute teacher in the district in which you are student teaching, you are protected with liability insurance by the school district on days you substitute. However, it is still recommended that you consider the purchase of additional health and liability coverage.

Different school districts have different policies when it comes to permitting student teachers to serve as substitutes. Make certain that you understand what your district’s particular policies are before getting involved in what could be a “sticky” situation. When in doubt, check with your university field supervisor.

**CALENDAR**

University regulations require that any instructor follow the University Course Schedule as printed unless all students in a given course agree at the beginning of the semester to a modified schedule. There may be times when the University has a holiday and the schools are in session. You cannot be required to attend your student teaching assignment on these days. However, for many of you this break in your contact with the classroom could interfere with a sequence of instruction. In these cases, you may wish to proceed with your student teaching. If you do take the University holiday, then you are required to provide the cooperating teacher with lesson plans for these days so that your absence will not be detrimental to the children. For those days on which the school district has a holiday and the University is in session, your university field supervisor will require you to attend sessions on campus. No student teachers will be excused on these days. If the school or school district is conducting inservice sessions on these days, then you are expected to attend these sessions unless specifically requested not to by the school district.

**ABSENCES**

Perfect attendance during the internship/student teaching is expected. Documented medical emergencies and coordinator-approved absences must made up. Any other absences may result in either non-credit for the corresponding course to fieldwork (TYC, Classroom Management, Student Teaching) and/or documentation of “Unacceptable” on the final Summative Assessment unless approved by coordinator. The period of time spent in the classrooms this semester is minimal, yet critical. It is very important that the interns/student teachers be present at all times during this part of their training program. If an intern/student teacher must be absent because of a medical emergency, she/he will need to contact both the cooperating teacher and the university field supervisor, as soon as possible. Coordinators will require missed day(s) to be made up at the end of the semester. Interns/student teachers are expected to be in the school for the entire designated period and to follow the school’s faculty handbook for the times they are to report to and leave the school. Tardiness is unacceptable. Tardiness must be documented in the same way as above, or recorded on the Formative Assessment or Summative Assessment.

If for some reason the intern/student teacher must be absent, she/he must notify both the cooperating teacher and university field supervisor as far ahead of time as possible. The intern/student teacher should also assume responsibility for sending plans and/or materials to the school if such was her/his responsibility for that day. The intern/student teacher must make arrangements for the make-up day at the time of absence(s). Failure to notify the specified individuals may result in the termination of the intern/student teaching assignment. It is also the responsibility of each student to notify the university field supervisor and cooperating teacher in advance that she/he will be absent from class for a religious holiday and to receive advance approval for scheduling make-up time and work.

If at any time, in the judgment of the university field supervisor, cooperating teacher, and/or coordinator, an intern/student teacher’s absences or tardies are excessive, the intern/student teaching assignment may be terminated.

If you are scheduled to teach on a day that you will be absent, you should send lesson plans and/or materials to the school for your cooperating teacher. If you are scheduled to teach on a day that you will be absent, you should send lesson plans and/or materials to the school for your cooperating teacher. Failure to notify the specified individuals in the case of an absence may result in the termination of your assignment. It is the responsibility of each student to notify your university field supervisor and cooperating teacher, in advance, that you will be absent from class on a religious holiday and to receive, in advance, their approval for scheduling make-up time and work.

Absences are to be made up. If you request an absence to attend an out-of-town job interview, then you must make-up the absence. Only one interview or job fair day absence is allowed. If at any time, in the judgment of your university field supervisor and/or cooperating teacher, your absences are excessive, your assignment may be terminated.

**STUDENT TEACHING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

The student teaching Summative Assessment form should be shown to you at the start of the semester. This form will be completed by both your University field supervisor and cooperating teacher at the end of the semester. You should become familiar with this form and seek feedback from your University field supervisor and cooperating teacher throughout the semester with respect to your progress in the categories included.

At the end of the semester, you are entitled to see these evaluation forms and sign them indicating such. Your electronic signature merely indicates that you have seen them and not that you necessarily agree with them.

You can usually expect that the evaluation by your university field supervisor will vary somewhat from that of the cooperating teacher. They will have seen you at different times doing different things so undoubtedly they will develop some different impressions. However, this should not result in substantial disagreements.

**OUTSIDE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Outside activities (e.g., employment, sports, sororities, fraternities) should be held to a minimum during student teaching. During this period of time, your first responsibility is to the students you teach. Outside responsibilities should not interfere with your student teaching responsibilities.
WORDS TO THE WISE

1. Instructional materials prepared using supplies provided by the school usually remain with the school at the completion of the student teaching assignment. If you know that you will want to keep some of the instructional materials for your own use, check with your school's policy and then decide whether you will want to purchase the necessary supplies yourself.

2. Administering medicine to your students is not permitted at any time. Even if your cooperating teacher gives you the ‘go ahead,’ you must decline and cite University policy as your reason for doing so.

3. Corporal punishment (even in the mildest form) is not permitted at any time. Be very careful of the ways in which you touch your students, especially when you become angry or frustrated.

4. Do not drive your own car to take students on a field trip or to deliver them anywhere away from campus. You could be legally liable for any accidents or injuries.

5. It is critical that you take care of yourself during student teaching so that you will be able to meet the rigorous demands that the semester imposes. Make sure to make healthy choices about your diet, exercise, and rest.

6. Should you be asked to substitute, please contact your university field supervisor immediately. School district and university policies must be strictly followed in this area. Students will be allowed to substitute for their own cooperating teacher only, and on a very limited basis with the following conditions:
   a. Students must be registered and have completed training with the district’s substitute office.
   b. Prior authorization for substituting must be secured by agreement among the university field supervisor, cooperating teacher, campus principal, and the student.

7. Grading papers only for the subjects you are teaching is a practice you are encouraged to follow during student teaching. If you are experiencing pressure from your cooperating teacher in this matter, you should notify your University field supervisor immediately.

8. Writing lesson plans during class time is not permitted. You should be using that time to observe your cooperating teacher and/or to monitor your students as they work.

9. First impressions are extremely important in the public schools. Dress like a professional at all times. This is not to suggest that you have to purchase an expensive wardrobe. However, it is advisable that you ask about the dress code and observe what the faculty members are wearing and then dress accordingly. Good grooming is part of the professional image you create.

A FINAL WORD

Remember, this experience is one of the most important of your college career. Give it your best effort. What you do now will become a part of your professional papers. You now must take responsibility for your teaching career by completing this experience successfully. Be sure to communicate with both your cooperating teacher and the university field supervisor at all times. If you encounter a serious problem, inform the appropriate person in order to correct the problem. If this is impossible, get in touch with Dr. Sharon H. Evans, Director of Education Services, Sanchez Building 244, at 471-1511.

GOOD LUCK!

Section III: Suggestions for Supervising Student Teachers

Some common questions and concerns that have arisen in the past can be avoided by considering some limiting factors and by following sound practices.

BACKGROUND OF STUDENT TEACHERS

Student teachers are “students of teaching.” They are not experienced teachers, nor are they competent in all areas of teaching. Student teaching is to be a learning experience to help the individual student teacher develop or improve those skills that are needed for effective teaching. For example, it will be rare that a student teacher comes to you with well-developed skills in classroom management. It is expected that these skills will be developed during student teaching. In general, it is desirable that you perceive a student teacher just as you would any student coming to you as a teacher. We encourage you to determine what they can and cannot do, and then plan learning experiences to help them develop their full potential and overcome any deficiencies.

DROPPING OR FAILING A STUDENT TEACHER

It is important to keep accurate records of observations and feedback sessions for your student teacher. When a student is dropped or failed, it is vital that you have records showing that you notified the student teacher about specific deficiencies he or she possessed, that the student teacher was given help in overcoming these deficiencies, and that the student was unable to do so. If you have done this, then you will protect yourself in case litigation arises at a later date. The final decision of a credit/no credit grade is made by the university faculty coordinator.

FEEDBACK TO STUDENT TEACHERS
The primary purpose of observations and feedback is to help student teachers develop skills as teachers. Recognize that some qualities we hope to develop in student teachers are the ability to perceive their teaching behavior realistically, to be able to generate alternative ways of doing things, and to apply these alternatives in situations where the alternatives are likely to be most effective. Student teachers will not develop the ability to conduct self-assessment if they are not provided the opportunity to do so. If you constantly evaluate the student teacher’s performance and communicate these evaluations with them, then they will become concerned with doing those things that please you, and they will not have the opportunity to analyze their own effectiveness and develop their own alternatives. The function of observation and feedback in part is to foster self-analysis skills so that in the years to come the student teacher will be able to diagnose his or her own weaknesses and prescribe his or her own cure. Feedback sessions, therefore, should be primarily problem solving in nature. This implies a procedure that primarily involves a critical self-analysis by the student teacher with the help of the observer, rather than simply a process in which the observer tells the student teacher what should or should not have been done. The following considerations should be included in the feedback sessions:

- Through questioning, the student teacher should clarify what it was they did and the purpose for doing it. For example, if the observer and student teacher had agreed to focus on the kind of responses the student teacher makes to student questions during the observation, then the observer might say, “When Robert responded to your question by asking another question, you answered his question.” (Hopefully, the observation form would have the questions and answers paraphrased on it.) “What was your intent in answering the question?”
- Once a particular behavior and corresponding behavior (as in the example) have been identified, then the observer can help the student teacher analyze the behavior in order to decide if the desired objective was achieved. For example, using the same situation the observer might ask, “What indication was there from Robert that you satisfied his curiosity?”
- The next item that is quite frequently pursued with some benefit is an identification of alternative objectives that could have been accomplished in the situation along with alternative strategies to accomplish them. Again, following the example above, the observer could ask, “In situations when students ask the teacher questions, what are some alternate ways the teacher could respond? What could be accomplished with each of these alternate ways of responding?”
- Finally, any feedback session should hopefully end with an attempt to identify what behaviors the student teacher will work on and how the observer can help in this process during the next observation. For example, the observer might ask, “What skills do you feel you should work on, and what do you think we could analyze in the next observation to help you?”

It is important at the conclusion of this process to record the results of this session. The sections in the form do not imply a step-by-step process. Rather, the form should be used to summarize the analysis after it is completed. The purposes of the form are:

1. to retain a record for memory purposes,
2. to have a record useful when making assessment,
3. to communicate to others working with the student teacher, and
4. to retain records that might be useful when providing references.

In particular, it would be very helpful to others working with the student teacher to be aware of the problems that might exist, to know those things the student teacher has done well and to know what kind of things the student teacher is working on. Your concerns and suggestions as a cooperating teacher would also become a part of this record. Please recognize, however, that suggestions have a more appropriate place in a feedback session itself than they do on the observation form to be used in the feedback session. When an observation form is used in this context, it is important to recognize that it serves primarily the function of an anecdotal record. For further suggestions, observations, and observation forms see the following section.

**OBSERVATIONS**

Regular observation of your student teacher, followed by feedback, is one of the most important tasks. It should be given priority over almost everything else except the planning you do as a cooperating teacher. You should observe your student teacher regularly (no less than once per week) and provide feedback after each observation session.

Your observations and feedback serve a dual function - instruction and evaluation. It is essential to recognize that the primary purpose of both should be instruction; that is, your primary function as a cooperating teacher is to help the student teacher develop his or her skills as a teacher. Assessment and evaluation are of secondary importance.

Scheduling - It is sometimes desirable to schedule observations of a student teacher so that he or she knows beforehand that he or she will be observed. This allows the student teacher to prepare the lesson so that you will see them at their best. It is of equal importance, however, to observe the student without giving them advance notification. In this way you will likely see the student teacher as they usually teach. Both observations are important in helping a student teacher develop instructional skills.

Records - Copies of observations must be shared with Cooperating Teachers, Student Teachers, and Field Supervisors.

Recording forms are available online at [https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/COEfieldexperiences/Student+Assessments](https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/COEfieldexperiences/Student+Assessments).

Your record of the observation should be anecdotal in nature, and as such should include descriptions of specific behaviors and incidents. In general, evaluative statements and phrases should be avoided. It is also important to record all incidents in the context in which they occurred so that they can be reconstructed later in the feedback session. Avoid using vague generalities.

Recognize further that when an observation form serves primarily as an anecdotal record, it is of very limited value for communication purposes without a follow-up feedback session and the resulting record. Always provide the student teacher and university field supervisor with a record of both the observation and corresponding feedback forms.

In addition to predetermined, agreed-upon focus areas, you should observe some areas without the prior knowledge of the student teacher. For example, if you wished to focus on the cognitive level of questions usually used by the student teacher, then you would not want to tell them beforehand that you would be looking at this.
When choosing areas to observe, it is necessary to restrict the observations to one or two kinds of areas. First of all, this is likely the limit that could easily be recorded on an anecdotal record. Secondly, the student teacher will only be able to focus on one or two areas for improvement at any one time. To pursue more areas would, therefore, be unproductive. It is important that this limiting factor be considered in both the observation and the subsequent feedback session.

**INITIAL ORIENTATION CONFERENCE**

It will be important to establish a good working relationship with the student teacher. Your first conference together is a good time to get things started on a firm footing. There are several things that should probably be accomplished during this conference:

- Try to get to know each other as individuals by discussing backgrounds, interests, hobbies, and concerns. It's also a good idea to exchange telephone numbers in case of emergencies.
- Spend some time clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- Identify and discuss the concerns of the student teacher as they begin the student teaching assignment.
- Discuss the first-week's tasks of the student teacher.
- Provide the student teacher some background on the school and the students in your classroom.
- Clarify any questions about policy or regulations the student teacher might have.

**WELCOMING THE STUDENT TEACHER**

Student teachers tend to be very fearful of you at the start of the semester. This fear is due partially to the unknown aspects of the experience, and it can be alleviated in part by helping the student teacher become an accepted member of the professional staff. There are several things you can do to accomplish this:

- Introduce the student teacher to other teachers that they may work with or come into contact with.
- Introduce the student teacher to office personnel.
- Have copies of textbooks and other curriculum materials available to lend the student teacher.
- Provide them a small workspace.
- Introduce them to the class on the first day.

**LEAVING THE CLASSROOM**

In general, it is best for you (the cooperating teacher) not to leave the classroom until you are confident the student teacher can handle the particular teaching assignment planned. Even then, the length of time you leave the classroom should be brief early in the student teaching experience. Until the student teacher has developed adequate behavioral management skills, as well as basic teaching skills, it would be wise to stay in the immediate vicinity of the classroom when leaving the student teacher alone. In general, it is important to weigh both the welfare of the children with the development needs of the student teacher. If in doubt, the welfare of the children should take precedence.

**FINAL SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

The student teaching evaluation forms (Summative Assessments), which are to be electronically submitted at the end of the semester, should be used to assess the proficiency levels of student teachers as of end of the semester. If a student teacher lacked certain skills at the beginning of the semester but possessed them at a high level at the end of the semester, then one should merely describe the proficiency at the end of the semester and not mention the early deficiency.

The evaluations should be realistic descriptions of the student teacher's abilities. If we are to continue to place our students with school districts with the same success rate as in the past, then we must maintain the credibility of our assessments with hiring officials.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The University welcomes any suggestions you might have for the improvement of field experiences or its programs in general. If you have questions or suggestions regarding field experiences, please feel free to contact Dr. Sharon H. Evans, Director of Education Services (471-1511).