

Elementary Partner Guidebook

Updated: 4/12/17, jlc

The University of Texas at Austin

College of Education

Education Services

1912 Speedway, D5200
Sanchez Building 244
Austin, TX 78712
(512) 471-1511

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.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Teachers graduating from our programs will have the dispositions and skills needed to be highly effective teachers of children from all racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic groups presently underserved by the public school system in Texas.

Elementary Cooperating Teacher Guidebook

Here are some examples of your role as a cooperating teacher:

- **Modeling how to manage** a classroom and small groups of students.
- **Providing opportunities** to work with, lead, and teach small groups/whole class.
- **Demonstrating** how to think through the process of planning a lesson.
- **Taking time to talk** about the TEKS and curriculum guides.
- **Providing guidance** and assistance in planning lessons they teach using the templates from their university coursework.
- **Observing lessons** two to eight times during the semester and providing both oral and written feedback (number depends on PDS semester).
- **Providing written comments** for mid-term and final student evaluations.
- **Including the intern or student teacher** in faculty interactions, parent conferences, and school meetings as appropriate.
- **Participating in the mid-term and final three-way conferences** (depending on PDS semester).

How to prepare for the preservice teacher's arrival:

Here is a checklist you may find useful in helping the beginning teacher feel welcome when he/she arrives the first day:

- Invite the intern/student teacher to visit your classroom before the first day of the placement. This is a good way to establish a positive rapport and to show the intern/student teacher important places in the school building.
- Provide the beginning teacher with a desk or table area and place for his/her belongings.
- Ask the intern/student teacher to provide you with a brief résumé or autobiography (many times this is a university course requirement).
- Introduce your intern/student teacher to the office staff and the principal.
- Talk to the principal about introducing your intern/student teacher at the next faculty meeting and/or parent-teacher conference.
- Ask the intern/student teacher to make nametags for each student. In this way, he/she will have an opportunity to get to know their names more quickly.
- Furnish the intern/student teacher with a spiral notebook to serve as a dialogue or conversation journal between the two of you throughout the semester.
- Ask the beginning teacher to write a short letter introducing him/herself to be sent to parents or to be included in your next class newsletter. You may need to furnish some guidance as to the content and length of the letter. This is a good opportunity for the intern/student teacher to share with you the videotaping agreement form for parents to sign and return.
- Ask your intern/student teacher to bring some photographs and information about himself/herself and create a bulletin board for the class. (Optional)

Planning a formal conversation or letter of introduction for your intern or student teacher:

It is important to discuss expectations early and to stress the importance of open communication throughout the semester. Taking time to write a letter of introduction is a good way to do this. It will provide a useful springboard for questions and set the tone for a warm, professional working relationship from the first day your beginning teacher enters your classroom. A letter in which you introduce yourself and outline these expectations might include:

- A bit about your background: hometown, family, alma mater, number of years teaching, why you decided to become a teacher, etc.
- Some general information about the students in your classes, socioeconomic make-up of the community, parent occupations, parental involvement in school activities, students with special needs, etc.
- A copy of your daily schedule and class seating charts.
- Some information about the levels of instruction in your classes.
- A brief explanation of your classroom management system.
- Your philosophy of teaching, education, role of teacher, etc.
- Information concerning your expectations for your intern/student teacher: punctuality, professionalism, openness, initiative, etc.
- A closing paragraph about what your intern/student teacher may expect from you.

You may also find that a planned conversation including the above information plus a folder of important materials might be more your style. The important thing is to take the time to formally introduce yourself and your classroom information by making a personal connection and providing necessary information about your class.

Preservice teacher observing classroom students and monitoring progress:

Your intern/student teacher can learn much about the students by observing them as they work. In fact, it is now a requirement by TEA that they must formally observe you. Here are some suggestions to make this task more focused.

- Each day for the first few days, give the beginning teacher an index card and ask him/her to record observations and write questions concerning the students that the two of you will discuss later. Some sample focus questions follow:
 - Which students seem to be visual learners? Auditory? Kinesthetic? How is instruction adjusted for these students?
 - Which students work better independently? With a partner? In groups?
 - Which students seem to finish their work first? Last?
 - Show your intern/student teacher how to keep running reading records on each student.
 - Include your intern/student teacher in grading or assessing student papers or center work (checklists, rubrics, portfolios, grading system).
 - If you keep portfolios or folders of student work, share these with your intern/student teacher early in the semester.
 - Allow interns/student teachers to review student agendas (upper grades) or prepare folders of weekly work in order to note typical student progress.

Examining texts and curriculum materials:

Interns and student teachers are sometimes uncomfortable asking about how you plan. All experienced classroom teachers plan differently, but here are some suggestions to help your preservice teacher ease into the process:

- Allow intern/student teacher to examine some of the texts and resources that you use in your planning and teaching.
- Share the TEKS and IPGs for your grade level and show how you incorporate them into your teaching and planning.
- Let the beginning teacher sit in on your team planning sessions and encourage him/her to take an active role in participating.
- When you teach a lesson involving a textbook, ask the intern/student teacher to follow along from your teacher's guide so that he/she will begin to see how you use these materials.
- Ask the intern/student teacher to share with you the resources s/he is using to prepare required lessons (Web sites, curriculum guides, outside resources).

Getting your intern/student teacher actively involved:

Preservice teachers usually begin their placements eager to work with students and learn about their chosen profession. However, sometimes they are unsure of how to "jump in" while still in the learning stages. Here are some ways to get the intern/student teacher actively involved.

- **Coursework requirements:**
 - If your beginning teacher is there 1-2 days per week, ask him or her about the assignments she or he is responsible for completing during the placement and how you can support his or her learning.
 - If your student is a full-time student teacher, schedule time to look at the semester calendar together to plan how the pacing of the student teaching might progress. A pacing guide or teaching plan is usually one of the requirements of the student teacher.
- **Modeling teacher behavior through planned observations:**
 - Encourage him or her to observe you teach a lesson. Focus on opening or closing a lesson, wait time, managing inappropriate behavior, learning styles, etc.
 - Ask him/her to take notes during the lesson and write down questions and observations about teaching or about specific student behavior.
- **Adjusting to being in front of the class:**

Give your intern/student teacher several opportunities to be in front of the students and interact with them prior to planning and teaching his or her first lesson. Co-teaching with you is an excellent way to ease into this. Research is showing benefits to the students, as well as the student teachers when co-teaching. Here are some suggestions to help your beginning teacher to feel confident and in control in front of the students:

- Taking roll and other beginning of class routines

- Talking one-on-one with the students to get to know them better
- Collecting papers at the end of a lesson
- Sharing information about him/herself with the class (hometown, hobbies, experiences)
- Moving “up front” as he or she circulates around the room during work periods to begin to get comfortable being in front of the students
- Get the beginning teacher involved in a moderate level of grading
- Encourage your intern/student teacher to assist you with a small amount of group work
- Reading a particular story or article to the class and to plan some questions for discussion afterwards

Recording observations for feedback and conferencing with your preservice teacher:

Before a planned observation of your Intern/ST:

- Discuss together the **goals of the lesson to be observed**.
- Discuss **the success indicators of the lesson**. Ask: “How will you know if the students are on task?” or “How will you know if they have learned?” (See more sample questions below)
- Discuss the **materials and the preparation needed** for the lesson.
- Discuss **approaches, strategies, and decisions that may need to be made during the lesson**.
- **Explain the methods of data collection** you will use for the observation. Some lessons involve anecdotal writing; others may involve timing, tallying, or coding.

During an observation:

- **Focus on the observation goals** that were agreed upon before the lesson.
- **Write down questions and suggestions** for later discussion.
- **Look for positives, as well as suggestions** for improvement.
- **Collect data on both teacher behavior and student behavior** that may prove useful to your intern/student teacher.

Reflective conferencing after the lesson:

- Pick an **appropriate time and place** for your discussion. Talk to your intern/student teacher as soon as possible after the observation of the lesson...remember that timing is important. However, if it has been a long or rough day for both of you, it might be best to save the conference for tomorrow.
- Be seated in chairs that are side-by-side...not across from one another. You want to **emphasize the feelings of collegiality**.
- Talk with your intern/student teacher in private. ***Never offer criticism*** during the lesson, in front of the students, or in the presence of other faculty.
- Begin by asking the beginning teacher **how he or she felt** about the lesson. **Encourage him or her to discuss some of the success indicators** of the lesson. Ask:
 - “How could you tell that the students were engaged?”
 - “How could you tell that they were successful during guided practice?” (See more samples below)
 - If your beginning teacher “draws a blank” when you ask these questions, begin by **pointing out a few positives** that you observed.
 - **Share the data** you collected during the observation. Together, summarize and reflect on impressions and assessments of the lesson.
 - **Check for clarity** of communication.
 - Give your intern/student teacher an **opportunity to ask questions** that he or she may have. Remember that feedback is most useful when the receiver formulates a question that the observer can answer.
 - **End on a positive note.**
 - **Concentrate on what has been learned** from this lesson and how it can be effectively used next time.
 - If the lesson did not go as planned, remind the beginning teacher that there is MUCH to learn and that **tomorrow is a new day** and a new opportunity and that she or he is here to learn.
- A direct correlation exists between the levels and structure of questions and the production of professional, reflective thought.
- In the same way we plan for higher-level cognitive thinking for our elementary students, we might ask interns/student teachers questions at varying levels of critical thinking during our planning conference prior to observing a lesson (mentor observing preservice teacher) and during our post-conference for reflective thinking and evaluating.

Sample mentor questions for planning and reflecting conferences:

- A direct correlation exists between the levels and structure of questions and the production of professional, reflective thought.
- In the same way we plan for higher-level cognitive thinking for our elementary students, we might ask interns/student teachers questions at varying levels of critical thinking during our planning conference prior to observing a lesson (mentor observing preservice teacher) and during our post-conference for reflective thinking and evaluating.

Planning Conference – The Mentor Teacher might ask:
“What is your lesson going to be about?” (Describe)
“As you see the lesson unfolding, what will students be doing?” (Translate)

"As you envision this lesson, what do you see yourself doing to produce expected outcomes?" (Predict)
"What will you be doing first? Next? Last? How will you close the lesson?" (Sequence)
"As you envision the opening of the lesson, how long do you anticipate that will take?" (Estimate)
"What will you see students doing or hear them saying that will indicate to you that your lesson is successful?" (Operationally criteria)
"What will you look for in students' reactions to know if your directions are understood?" (Metacognition)
"What will you want me to look for and give you feedback about while I am watching this lesson?" (Describe)
Post-Conference or Reflecting Conference – The Mentor Teacher might ask:
"As you reflect back on the lesson, how do you feel it went?" (Assess)
"What did you see students doing (or hear them saying) that made you feel that way?" (Recall)
"What do you recall about your own behavior during the lesson?" (Recall)
"How did what you observed in student behavior compare with what you planned and presented?" (Compare)
"How did what you planned compare with what you did?" (Compare)
"What were you thinking when you decided to change the design of the lesson?" (Meta- cognition)
"What hunches do you have to explain why some students performed as you had hoped while others did not?" (Analyze)
"What did you do (or not do) to produce the results you wanted?" (Cause-effect)
"As you reflect on this discussion, what big ideas or insights are you discovering?" (Synthesize)
"As you plan future lessons, what ideas have you developed that might be carried forward to the next lesson or other lessons?" (Self-prescription)
"As you think back over our conversation, what has this coaching session done for you? What is it that I did (or did not) do? What assisted you? What could I do differently in future mentoring sessions? What did you do to grow your reflective practices?" (Evaluate)

Source: *Cognitive Coaching by Costa and Garmston*

These questions are only examples and are not meant to be prescriptive or complete. The purpose is to show how skilled coaches/mentors intentionally pose questions. Their intent is to engage, mediate, and thereby enhance the cognitive functions of teaching. The questions, therefore, are purposefully focused on, composed, and posed to deliberately engage the intellectual functions of teaching.

Formal evaluation of your intern or student teacher:

Formative and Summative Assessments for your preservice can be found on our Web site and on the Online Evaluation System. You will receive guidance as to dates, electronic vs. hand-written, as well as conference times. Below are some things to keep in mind:

- **Formative** Assessments are completed by the preservice teacher (PS), the university field supervisor (UF), and the cooperating teacher (CT), each on a separate form at mid-semester and again at the end of the intern semesters.
- **Summative** Assessments are completed only at the end of the student teaching semester and are completed by the CT and the UF only.
- Follow the instructions for your online Formative or Summative Evaluation completion and submission at <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/COEfieldexperiences/Student+Assessments>.
- Rate each observable behavior, if there was no opportunity to observe a specific behavior then you may rate that one as "NA."
- **It is very important for cooperating teachers and university field supervisors to cite specific examples of the observed behaviors as Supporting Evidence at the end of each of the four clusters, especially if scores are low.**
- A three-way conference will be held to discuss the evaluation and set goals if it is a formative assessment.
- The UT student will read each assessment and ask for clarification, if needed.
- The field supervisor and cooperating teacher will submit their copies online. This does not mean that the student teacher agrees with the assessment; only that she or he has read it.
- For the final Summative Assessment, both copies will comprise the final legal documentation.
- **It is the responsibility of the field supervisor to make sure that the student teacher hits the "reviewed" button so that the final document can be routed on to the coordinator for final approval.** If this does not occur, the field supervisor has the responsibility of following up with the signatures for routing.

An ending note:

Enjoy this time with your intern or student teacher and just know that we could not properly train our preservice teachers without your invaluable assistance, patient guidance, and unending support. Thank you very much!

FERPA Statement

I acknowledge institutional services for The University of Texas at Austin with regard to student information. I will not redisclose student FERPA information that is under the direct control and protection of The University of Texas at Austin.