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A Few Words about Student Teaching

Cooperating Mentor Teachers –

We want to thank you for willingness to open your classrooms to teacher candidates from Southeast Missouri State University. The responsibility to mentor a teacher candidate is great, yet rewarding. As you know, the experience of student teaching is a profound and challenging time. Your support gives teacher candidates assurance and direction to successfully complete their clinical requirements. Without your mentorship, they would not be adequately prepared for their own classrooms.

We are extremely proud of our teacher education program and the candidates that we prepare. Candidates from our program are fortunate enough to have already had supervised experiences in a minimum of 220 hours of field experiences in a variety of classroom settings. We set high expectations for our candidates, and hope they exceed any expectation you might have for them.

Thank you again for opening your classrooms. This is yet another way you are shaping the future of education.

Diana Rogers-Adkinson, Ph.D., Dean                     Brandy Hepler, M.A., Director
College of Education                                      Field & Clinical Experiences
The Role of the Cooperating Mentor Teacher

The Cooperating Mentor Teacher

Cooperating Mentor Teachers (CMT’s) play an integral role in the teacher candidate’s student teaching experience. The CMT is the guide, and support of the teacher candidate; the essential role model who has the potential to fully develop the teacher candidate into a competent, confident beginning teacher (Russell & Russell, 2011; Cavanagh & Prescott, 2011; Butler & Cuenca, 2012). Sixteen weeks is a substantial amount of time to spend with a candidate. It is within this time that the CMT’s has the opportunity to share their teaching experience and expertise while fostering the novice teacher into teaching excellence (Tannebaum, 2015).

CMT’s will mentor candidates throughout the duration of the student teaching experience in areas such as lesson planning, assessment, classroom management, parental interaction, and professionalism. The CMT could be considered the most critical person in the teacher candidate’s experience as they will have daily interactions, providing encouragement, support, and redirection as needed.

Requirements of Cooperating Mentor Teachers

1. CMT’s must be a full time staff members in a cooperating school with five years teaching experience in the candidate’s content field; with at least one of those years in the current cooperating school.
2. CMT’s must have state-approved certifications in the content areas and grade range in which they will have a teacher candidate.
3. CMT’s should hold a master’s degree. If the proposed cooperating teacher does not hold a master’s degree, the principal of the cooperating school should discuss this with the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences.
4. CMT’s must accept the students voluntarily and be willing to provide required supervision and evaluations.
5. CMT’s must be recommended and approved by the principal. This recommendation should be based on acceptable levels of performance according to the State of Missouri, personal characteristics which contribute to the establishment of a collegial relationship with teacher candidates, and acceptability as an ethical and professional model for candidates.

6. CMT’s are expected to mentor throughout the entire 16 week field experience.

**Last STEPS**

Prior to the beginning of the semester, you are highly encouraged to attend a Student Teaching Educational Preparation Seminar (Last STEPS) with your teacher candidate and the university supervisor (the triad). In the seminar, each member of the triad will be updated on the co-teaching method of student teaching, practice evaluating candidates with the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES), and informed considering the Missouri Preservice Teacher Assessment (MoPTA) in an effort to keep all participants current in the expectations of student teaching. Time will be spent working on inter-rater reliability for the MEES. At this training, you will meet your student teaching “team” and begin your professional relationships that will last for the entirety of the semester. You will also be presented with all materials and expectations for the semester.

Co-teaching includes certain teaching strategies which allow the cooperating teacher and teacher candidate to work together as a team for the student. If done properly, toward the middle of the co-teaching experience, the two teachers are seen as one by the students.

More information, including several useful handouts, will be given at the Last STEPS prior to the beginning of the semester and can also be found on our website at [http://www.semo.edu/studentteach/](http://www.semo.edu/studentteach/)
Orienting the Teacher Candidate to the Classroom and School

Early in the experience, the CMT should:

- Inform your class that they will have another teacher who will be working with you and them. Be sure the students know they are to respect and follow the instructions of the teacher candidate in the same way they respond to you, and that they will be held accountable.

- Introduce the teacher candidate to the principal and people who work in the school including administrative assistants, custodians, nurses, counselors, and cooks, and encourage the staff to make the candidate feel welcome. As time permits, orientation to the school’s programs will be very important.

- Provide the teacher candidate your contact information.

- Establish a workstation for the teacher candidate in the room. This may be a desk or table and a shelf or file drawer.

- Provide the teacher candidate with the school’s organizational structure; school policies, such as emergency procedures, harassment policies, and curriculum; Internet restrictions; and cell phone usage. Discuss regulations and expectations relative to dress, parking, smoking, coffee, workroom, etc.

- Prepare seating charts or other materials to help the teacher candidate learn the names of the students along with information on individual pupils, particularly those having educational accommodations.

- Plan to confer regularly with the teacher candidate about the duties, responsibilities, planning, and evaluation expected during the teacher candidate assignment.

- Provide the candidate with curriculum, content, and materials.

- Give the teacher candidate some classroom responsibilities immediately.

- Orient yourself with the co-teaching methodologies, the Missouri Educator Evaluation System, and the Missouri Pre-service Teacher Assessment (all covered in the Last STEPS seminar and available at http://www.semo.edu/studentteacher/) to better understand the expectations of the teacher candidate.
It would be helpful if the CMT would:

- Assist the teacher candidate to feel free and at ease in discussing problems.
- Assist the teacher candidate in realizing that you are concerned about their professional future.
- Develop a communication plan for regular discussion and how the teacher candidate may be involved in decision-making, as well as parental.

During the First Week

- Conference with the teacher candidate to determine what and when the teacher candidate will teach a lesson. The teacher candidate should be given access to materials for preparation. Explain how the lesson fits into the unit. A curriculum guide will be helpful at this point. The teacher candidate should submit lesson plans for the first lesson; conference with the teacher candidate in regard to the plans before the lesson is presented.
- The teacher candidate should examine examples of student work to become familiar with the achievement level of the class. Some correcting of formal evaluations may be helpful.
- Before the first lesson is taught by the teacher candidate, it is suggested that the teacher candidate work with individual students or small groups under your direction and participate in team or co-teaching. The teacher candidate may be asked to present special information, demonstrate or illustrate a concept, give the introduction of a lesson, or provide closure for a lesson. Ample notice should be given.
- Provide some time for the teacher candidate to observe various kinds of strategies you use and point out things that have worked well for you.
- The university supervisor will conduct an informal visit during the first or second full week. The first visit is to get acquainted, give you an opportunity to ask questions, and suggest when the first of your
Formative evaluations will take place. They will also conference with you at each evaluation to discuss progress.

- Please discuss your methods and beliefs about classroom management with your teacher candidate if you didn’t have the opportunity to do so at Last STEPS prior to the start of the semester. Beginning teachers surveyed listed discipline as their most common weakness. Likewise, principals who were surveyed listed classroom management as the most common problem area for beginning teachers. The teacher candidate needs to know your expectations and school regulations in regard to discipline. It is critical to help the teacher candidate develop proactive strategies to support students with behavior concerns.

Cooperating teachers may find the need to assist teacher candidates with concerns after they spend a few days in their assignment. Include the university supervisor if the nature of the concern has the potential to escalate or result in a possible termination of placement. Some of these topics might include: professional dress, classroom voice, handwriting, and the ability to accept feedback and make adjustments. Your mentorship in all areas is important and appreciated.

The Steps to Teaching

There are differing philosophies as to how early the teacher candidate should begin teaching. An outline of a teacher candidate’s 16-week schedule can be found at http://semo.edu/pdf/stuteach-suggested-schedule.pdf. If the teacher candidate has not yet been given responsibility for solo-teaching in at least some classes or activities on a regular basis by the third week, this should be a cause for concern. If you are unable to relinquish time and classes to the teacher candidate, or the teacher candidate has not demonstrated the necessary skill set to take over please inform the university supervisor.

By the third week of the semester, the teacher candidate should have at least 50% responsibility for planning and presenting learning activities and should also be responsible for evaluating success. One objective
of student teaching is to enable the student to get a complete overview of the teacher's task professionally; and certainly the whole-day teaching experience for some definite period of time is necessary for that objective to be reached. The CMT, students, and the teacher candidate alike will benefit from actively engaging in the co-teaching model. In this way, the teacher candidate gains a feeling of competence as well as constant support and assistance from the cooperating teacher and the cooperating teacher is able to provide more extensive differentiation for the students; time for reflection and synthesis is gained. The CMT also maintains close contact with the classes that must be a continuing responsibility after the teacher candidate leaves.

Planning

Co-planning with a teacher candidate is critical to the student teaching experience.

- Planning with a teacher candidate increases her/his status to that of a partner in the teaching process. This tends to give her/him added confidence for teaching success.

- A teacher candidate is expected to accept a major share of the responsibility for her/his professional growth.

- Planning together is more likely to clarify objectives. A teacher candidate needs to know what he/she is trying to do, and why he/she is doing it. The give and take of planning sessions should contribute to the focus on objectives.

Teacher Candidate Planning Expectations

A teacher candidate should present the CMT with all lesson plans (MoPTA model or the equivalent of) for the forthcoming week each **Friday prior to the week the plans will be implemented** for approval. This will allow for review and approval by the cooperating teacher. This is for all lessons, not just those being officially observed. Once the plans are approved by the CMT, the teacher candidate will then send an electronic copy of the lesson plans to the university supervisor no later than the Sunday prior to the implementation of the plans at 11:59 p.m. This practice will continue until the CMT and university supervisor agree the teacher
candidate has demonstrated a level of competence without a negative impact on the quality of instruction in the classroom. At this point in time, a short daily lesson planning template, located at http://semo.edu/pdf/stuteach-lessonplans.pdf, can be utilized. The shorter daily lesson plan will also be turned in each Friday prior to the week the plans will be implemented for approval by the CMT and to the university supervisor the Sunday before implementation by 11:59 p.m.

Reflection on Teaching

It is critical for the CMT to discuss with the teacher candidate why particular choices were made and others rejected concerning curriculum, classroom management, etc. In this way, the teacher candidate will better understand the motives and rationales underlying particular choices. Since many policies and procedures were in place prior to their arrival, understanding the "history" of the classroom and school will help teacher candidates make their own decisions in the future, when the school and classroom environment may be very different.

Candidate Competencies in Technology Use

Through the EdVolution® initiative, Southeast Missouri State University has created a technology rich learning and teaching environment for education majors. Students have had access to technology as well as curricular expectations throughout their coursework centered on the latest technology innovations. The infusion of effective educational technology is encouraged and expected during student teaching.

Individualized Education Plan Meetings (IEP’s)

Observing an IEP meeting is an excellent experience for teacher candidates; however, these meetings are often sensitive. If all parties involved with an IEP are willing to allow the teacher candidate to observe, such an experience would give the student even more insights into the professional life of a teacher. Please make it
extremely clear to the teacher candidate that what is said in these meetings is confidential. Special Education majors should be provided this opportunity as it is a primary duty for all special education teachers.

The Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES)

The university supervisor will complete the first performance observation using the Clinical Observational Tool (COT). The university supervisor will discuss the scores and feedback with the teacher candidate and CMT after the lesson. For lessons 2-6, the CMT and university supervisor will each score the candidate on the COT. They will then discuss the lesson and collectively complete the overall performance evaluation of the candidate and fill out the Missouri Educational Evaluation System (MEES).

Tips on Pre/Post Conferencing

- Allow the teacher candidate take the lead in the pre/post conferences. Allow them time to synthesize/reflect on the experience and come up with their own plan of improvement.
- The CMT and university supervisor should be concise and emphatic with her/his suggestions as teacher candidates can be sensitive to suggestions
- The CMT and university supervisor should share with the teacher candidate practical instructional strategies and relate them to research and theory. It is important to model how theory and current research can be applied in the classroom.
- As with any feedback, make sure to schedule the post meetings as soon as possible after the actual teaching as possible. This way, the experience is fresh in everyone’s mind.

These forms, the COT and MEES will be discussed and given to the cooperating teachers at the Last STEPS training prior to the beginning of the semester. A guide and rubric to the forms is located at http://www.semo.edu/studentteach/. “Look-fors” are also available on the electronic forms. They are based on the following indicators:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the academic language of the appropriate discipline applicable to the certification area(s) sought as defined by the Subject Competencies for Beginning Teachers in Missouri.

2. Demonstrate content knowledge and ability to use multiple subject specific methodologies for specific instructional purposes to engage students.

3. Recognize diversity and the impact it has on education (i.e. student learning, research, etc.)

4. Recognize the components and organization of an effective curriculum, create aligned learning experiences, locate national and state standards, and align them to learning outcomes.

5. Demonstrate how to select appropriate strategies for addressing individual student needs in meeting curriculum objectives.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of research-based models of critical thinking and problem-solving, including various types of instructional strategies, to support student engagement in higher-level thinking skills.

7. Use classroom management, motivation, engagement strategies and techniques to promote student interest and learning.

8. Demonstrate competence in managing time, space, transitions, and activities to create and effective learning environment.

9. Recognize and identify the influence of classroom, school, and community culture on student relationships and the impact on the classroom environment and learning.

10. Describe the importance of and use effective verbal and non verbal communication techniques.

11. Use a variety of formal and informal methods of assessments.

12. Design, and utilize pre and post-tests to identify prior knowledge and chart progress.
13. Can explain ethical and legal implications of confidentiality of student records; can describe and analyze strategies to communicate student progress to students, families, colleagues, and administrators.

14. Reflect on teaching practices to refine their own instructional process, in order to promote the growth and learning of students.

15. Participate in collaborative curriculum and staff development meetings and demonstrate the ability to collaborate with her/his cooperating teacher and supervisor to establish relationships in the school, district, and community.

16. Work with the cooperating teacher/supervisor to engage with the larger professional community across the system to identify and provide needed services to support individual learners.

Midterm Evaluation

A midterm grade will populate based on the collaborative scores of the third lesson on the MEES. This lesson should be observed mid-semester, around week 7 or 8. The grade will be automatically populated on the MEES in the student teaching webpage according to the grading scale.

If the candidate has earned a “C” according to the grading policy, the supervisor will contact the Office of Field and Clinical Experiences to set up a meeting for the Director to come to the school, observe a lesson, discuss the situation with the Triad, and assist in creating a plan of improvement.

Professional Competency Profile

At the completion of the third evaluation, the triad will discuss progress and set at least four goals for improvement in the Professional Competency Profile portion of the MEES. These goals require that the candidate identify how to obtain the goals and what resources/support they may need. This chart is considered to be the candidate’s Professional Competency Profile. This chart does not need to be submitted in any other location. During the summative conversation (after the sixth lesson), the candidate will submit the results of the goals in the respective boxes on the chart in the MEES.
Feedback Suggestion

In general, it is suggested that the CMT provides ongoing daily feedback to the teacher candidate.

Grading

The basis for evaluation is quality and consistency of demonstration of the teaching competencies as reflected in the 16 indicators identified on the MEES. The following grading system will be used as a guideline:

At Midterm:

1. An "A" grade represents a superior level of competence in all areas and is viewed as representing an exceptional student teaching performance. It should be supported by ratings and comments. A student need not be perfect to receive an "A," but an "A" should represent top performance and notable effectiveness. All areas should be rated in either a 2 or 3 in at least of 11 of the 16 MEES standards with no ratings in the “0”, “N/K”, or “N/A” categories.

2. In order to receive a “B”, the teacher candidate must earn a rating of 2 or 3 in at least of 10 of the 16 MEES standards with no ratings in the “0”, “N/K”, or “N/A” categories. The "B" should be viewed as evidence of a strong level of competence.

3. In order to receive a “C”, the teacher candidate must earn a rating of 2 or 3 in at least of 7 of the 16 MEES standards with no ratings in the “0”, “N/K”, or “N/A” categories. A grade of "C" means that the experience is acceptable. However, the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences will come to the school to observe a lesson and assist in an improvement plan.

4. A teacher candidate will receive a “D” when they fail to meet the minimum standards for a “C”. The Director of Field and Clinical Experiences will come to the school to observe a lesson and assist in an improvement plan and/or removal from the placement as needed.

At Summative:
5. An "A" grade represents a superior level of competence in all areas and is viewed as representing an exceptional student teaching performance. It should be supported by ratings and comments. A student need not be perfect to receive an "A," but an "A" should represent top performance and notable effectiveness. All areas should be rated in either a 2 or 3 in all columns on the summative evaluation form (MEES).

6. In order to receive a “B”, the teacher candidate must earn a rating of 2 or 3 in at least of 14 of the 16 MEES standards with no ratings in the “0”, “N/K”, or “N/A” categories. The "B" should be viewed as evidence of a strong level of competence.

7. In order to receive a “C”, the teacher candidate must earn a rating of 2 or 3 in at least of 12 of the 16 MEES standards with no ratings in the “0”, “N/K”, or “N/A” categories. A grade of "C" means that the experience is acceptable and does not have to be repeated to get credit for student teaching.

8. A teacher candidate will receive a “D” when they fail to meet the minimum standards for a “C”. In order to complete the Teacher Education requirements, the experience must be repeated. Students who earn lower than a “C” in any professional education course in two attempts will not be permitted to continue in the Teacher Education Program.

Definition of Rating Descriptors
- N/A: Not Attempted: The teacher candidate did not attempt the standard.
- N/K: The teacher candidate does not possess the necessary knowledge and cannot apply or demonstrate the performance
- 0: The teacher candidate possesses the necessary knowledge but cannot apply or demonstrate the performance
- 1: The teacher candidate possesses the necessary knowledge and inconsistently and somewhat effectively demonstrates the performance at the emerging teacher level
• 2: The teacher candidate possesses the necessary knowledge and consistently and effectively demonstrates the performance at the emerging teacher level

• 3: The teacher candidate demonstrates consistently at the (2) Level and is beginning to demonstrate consistency at the (3) Level

Handling Concerns

Who to talk to

If problems arise, first talk with your teacher candidate. Be candid. Teacher candidates are encouraged to accept professional criticism. If the problem persists, then:

• Talk with the university supervisor about the issue(s). If you feel the issue needs immediate attention, call or email the supervisor directly. The supervisor is there to not only support the teacher candidate, but the CMTs as well.

• Contact the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences. While you may call the office to voice your concerns, it will be necessary for you to put them in detailed writing and email them as well. The phone number is 573-651-2125. Email: bhepler@semo.edu The Director will set up a meeting with the CMT, teacher candidate, university supervisor, and if needed, the building principal to discuss the matter and solutions.

Terminating Assignment

Schools reserve the right to refuse assignment of any student and the right to terminate a teacher candidate's placement for cause. After the meeting with the Director of Field and Clinical Experiences, CMT, university supervisor, and teacher candidate, termination of placement may be determined. Causes for termination may include consistent unprofessionalism, breaches of school district policy, illegal activity on the part of the teacher candidate, inability to perform duties required of a teacher candidate, escorting or being escorted by pupils from the schools in which they are student teaching, etc.
Honorariums

There is an honorarium paid the CMT’s who supervise teacher candidates each semester. This serves as a token of our appreciation for the valuable assistance cooperating teachers provide in helping prepare candidates for the profession. We believe that the satisfaction received from making a contribution to the profession far exceeds the value of the honorarium. Please watch your email for instructions on how to obtain this gift.

References


