



SOUTHEAST MISSOURI
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College of Education, Health, and Human Studies

Student Teaching Handbook

Mentor Teacher Edition



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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.

Rodney Pensel, Ed. D

Director of Field Experiences

The Role of the Mentor Teacher

Mentor Teachers (MTs) play an integral role in the teacher candidate's student teaching experience. The MT 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 MTs have the opportunity to share their teaching experience and expertise while fostering the novice teacher into teaching excellence (Tannebaum, 2015).

MTs 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 MT 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 Mentor Teachers

1. MTs must be 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. MTs must have state-approved certifications in the content areas and grade range in which they will have a teacher candidate.
3. It is preferred that a MT 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 Experiences.
4. MTs must accept the student voluntarily and be willing to provide required supervision and evaluations.
5. MTs 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. MTs are expected to mentor throughout the entire 70-day field experience.

Triad Seminar

Prior to the beginning of the semester, MTs are highly encouraged to attend a Triad Seminar with your teacher candidate and the university supervisor (the triad). In the seminar, each member of the triad will be given information on the co-teaching method of student teaching and evaluating candidates with the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (MEES). 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.

Orienting the Teacher Candidate to the Classroom and School

Early in the experience, the MT should:

- Inform your class that they will have another teacher who will be working with you and them. Be sure the students know that 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.
- Share school policies, such as emergency procedures, harassment policies, and curriculum; Internet restrictions; and cell phone usage.

- Before the first day of teacher candidate attendance, 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*; such as, helping with particular classroom procedures, assisting when students request help, etc.
- Orient yourself with the co-teaching methodologies and the Missouri Educator Evaluation System (covered in the Triad Seminar and available at <https://semo.edu/field-experiences/mentors>) to better understand the expectations of the teacher candidate.

It would be helpful if the MT 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 communication and involvement.

During the First Week

- Conference with the teacher candidate to determine how 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 coteaching. 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. In addition, some explanation of class procedures will be helpful.
- 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 Triad Seminar 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.

Mentor 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 <https://semo.edu/field-experiences/mentors>. 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 solo teaching experience for some definite period of time is necessary for that objective to be reached. The MT, 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 MT also maintains close contact with the classes that must be a continuing responsibility after the teacher candidate leaves. **However, this should not prohibit the teacher candidate from being the solo lead teacher in the classroom for a period of time during the student teaching semester.**

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 MT with all lesson plans for the forthcoming week each **Wednesday prior to the week the plans will be implemented** for approval. This will allow for review and approval by the mentor teacher. This is for *all* lessons, not just those being officially

observed. Once the plans are approved by the MT, the teacher candidate will then send an electronic copy of the lesson plans to the university supervisor no later than the Friday prior to the implementation of the plans at 11:59 p.m. This practice will continue until the MT 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 <https://semo.edu/field-experiences/undergrad-teacher/lesson-planning> can be utilized. The shorter daily lesson plan will also be turned in **each Wednesday prior** to the week the plans will be implemented for approval by the MT and to the university supervisor the Friday before implementation by 11:59 p.m.

Reflection on Teaching

It is critical for the MT 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 an informal, initial baseline evaluation of the teacher candidate. The university supervisor will discuss the scores and feedback with the teacher candidate and MT after the lesson. Both the MT and the University supervisor will complete four formal MEES evaluations of the teacher candidates.

Tips on Pre/Post Conferencing

- Allow the teacher candidate to 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 MT and university supervisor should be concise and emphatic with her/his suggestions. It should be clear to teacher candidates exactly what they need to improve upon.
- The MT 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.

The MEES rubric will be discussed and given to the cooperating teachers at the Triad Seminar training prior to the beginning of the semester. A guide and rubric to the forms is located at <https://semo.edu/field-experiences/mentors>. “Look-fors” are also available on the electronic forms. They are based on the following indicators:

1. Standard 1: Content knowledge aligned with appropriate instruction. The teacher candidate understands the central concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry of the discipline(s) and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful and engaging for students.

2. Standard 2: Student Learning, Growth and Development. The teacher candidate understands how students learn, develop, and differ in their approaches to learning. The teacher candidate provides learning opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners and support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.
3. Standard 3: Curriculum Implementation. The teacher candidate recognizes the importance of long-range planning and curriculum development. The teacher candidate implements curriculum based upon student, district, and state standards.
4. Standard 4: Critical Thinking. The teacher candidate uses a variety of instructional strategies and resources to encourage students' critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
5. Standard 5: Positive Classroom Environment. The teacher candidate uses an understanding of individual/group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages active engagement in learning, positive social interaction, and self-motivation.
6. Standard 6: Effective Communication. The teacher candidate models effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques with students, colleagues, and families to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. Standard 7: Student Assessment and Data Analysis. The teacher candidate understands and uses formative and summative assessment strategies to assess the learner's progress and uses both classroom and standardized assessment data to plan ongoing instruction.
8. Standard 8: Professionalism. The teacher candidate is a reflective practitioner who continually assesses the effects of choices and actions on others. The teacher candidate actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally in order to improve learning for all students.
9. Standard 9: Professional Collaboration. The teacher candidate has effective working relationships with students, families, school colleagues, and community members.

Professional Development Plan

Prior to mid-term, the triad will discuss progress and set at least four goals for improvement in a Professional Development Plan. These goals require that the candidate identify how to obtain the goals and what resources/support they may need. The Professional Development Plan is uploaded to Chalk and Wire by mid-term and then again with results added by the end of the semester.

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 not only to support the teacher candidate, but the MT's as well.
- Contact the Director of Field Experiences. While you are welcome to call the office to voice your concerns, ultimately it will be necessary for you to put your concerns in writing and email them to the Director. The phone number is 573-651-2125 and the email is rpensel@semo.edu. The Director will set up a meeting with the MT, teacher candidate, university supervisor, and, if needed, the building principal to discuss the matter and seek solutions.

Rights of Host Schools

Schools reserve the right to refuse assignment of any student and the right to terminate a teacher candidate's placement for cause. After meeting with the Director of Field Experiences, MT, 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 to the MTs who work with teacher candidates each semester. This serves as a token of our appreciation for the valuable assistance mentor teachers provide in helping to 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 stipend.

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