

Pre-Internship Guide for Mentor Teachers and Teacher Candidates

Supporting the Professional Learning of Teacher Candidates

<http://education.msu.edu/te/elementary>





Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Contact Information for Elementary Teacher Education Personnel	4
Field Placements and Responsibilities of Program Participants	5
Organization of Field Placements	5
Responsibility in Working with Teacher Candidates	5
Mentor Teachers are Teacher Educators and Learners	6
Teacher Candidates' Responsibilities	7
Course Instructors' Responsibilities	8
Pre-Internship Coordinator's Responsibilities	8
Mentor Teachers' Responsibilities	8
Use of an Attendance Field Log in the Classroom	9
Helping Teacher Candidates Get the Most out of their Field Experiences	10
Core Mentoring Practices	13





Introduction

Welcome to the Elementary Teacher Preparation Program,

We're pleased that you have decided to work with a teacher candidate as a Mentor Teacher. We know that with your busy schedule and the heavy demands of teaching, it is a challenge to find time to work with another adult in the classroom.

We have prepared this guide to provide useful information about our program and policies that apply to the teacher candidates working in your classroom, and to provide suggestions for helping teacher candidates get the most out of the time they spend with you.

We hope that you will find the information useful and encourage you to make suggestions regarding additional information that you would find helpful.





Contact Information for Elementary Teacher Education Personnel

The **structure** in place in the TE Department enables faculty and graduate students to work together closely to plan and teach the MSU teacher preparation course sequence across the junior, senior and internship years and to work collaboratively with the Mentor Teachers (MTs) in schools who support the teacher candidates' school-based learning.

A **Program Director** represents the program in the Teacher Education Department's development of program and policy, which includes approaches to working with schools. The Program Director coordinates communication and curriculum development among faculty, graduate students who teach courses and with Mentor Teachers. The Program Director is available to talk with any participant about program development, courses, personnel, policy, or other ideas they wish to discuss.

An **Elementary Pre-Internship Coordinator** assists the Program Director in program staffing, communication with the Teacher Education Department and schools, and curriculum development. The **Elementary Pre-Internship Coordinator** makes field placements as well as fosters communication among course instructors, teacher candidates, and Mentor Teachers during the field experience and assists in developing innovative mentoring practices. She is available to talk with any participant in the teacher education program about program development, courses, personnel, policy, or other ideas they wish to discuss.

A **Secretary** maintains student records and assists the Coordination Personnel in maintaining communication among all participants in the program.





Field Placements and Responsibilities of Program Participants

Organization of Field Placements

The Elementary Pre-Internship Coordinator works with the principals to place juniors and seniors, and to facilitate communication between Teacher Preparation Program (TPP), Course Instructors and each school's MTs and Principal. The Elementary Pre-Internship Coordinator assures that all teacher candidates have suitable field placements and assures that all teacher candidates are well supported, supervised, and evaluated.

A set of 2-3 schools is associated with each section of TE 403/4/5/6 (senior level courses). While some field placement schools may include the schools in the internship clusters (where 5th year interns are placed), some field placement schools work only with juniors and seniors.

Seniors are generally in their field placements by October 1 and remain there for the MSU academic school year for 4 hours a week. In some cases, senior placements may change for Spring Semester.

TE301 has two components: a class component and a field component that requires working one-on-one with a child (referred to as "child study student") between grades 1-4 for a total of 45 minutes at least once per week.

Responsibility in Working with Teacher Candidates

The Teacher Preparation Program is designed to have juniors and seniors participate regularly in local classrooms (see <http://education.msu.edu/te/elementary>) The **Elementary Pre-Internship Coordinator** and principals identify (MTs) who would like to work with juniors in conjunction with TE 301, or seniors in conjunction with senior-year methods courses, TE 403, 404, 405 and 406. These courses focus on the following content:

- TE 301 (Fall or Spring): Learners, Learning, and Teaching in Context (classroom management, motivating students to learn, lesson planning, child study, emergent literacy)
- Fall (TE 403 and 404): Teaching Subject Matter to Diverse Learners (curriculum, planning and assessment in social studies and science.)
- Spring (TE 405 and 406): Crafting Teaching Practice (curriculum, planning and assessment in math and literacy.)





Instructors work toward helping the seniors make progress in several areas aimed toward learning to build inclusive learning communities for diverse learners:

- Constructing their own stance toward teaching in these subject matters
- Building their knowledge and skill in using a range of teaching strategies, tasks and resources that are consistent with their stance and meet the needs of diverse learners
- Developing knowledge of curriculum, planning and assessment
- Understanding children and adolescents as learners
- Understanding themselves as learners and colleagues

Mentor Teachers are Teacher Educators and Learners

Mentor Teachers who have worked with seniors have reported many advantages to opening their classroom to novices who are learning to teach, and taking on the role of teacher educator.

- They appreciate having another adult in the room that can provide instructional support, and enjoy having conversations about their students, curriculum and approaches to teaching in a variety of subject matter areas.
- They say it stretches them professionally to explain their thinking and share ideas about their professional practice. The conversations get them thinking about the reasons behind their practice that sometimes don't surface while they're so immersed in carrying out day-to-day teaching.
- MTs also learn from the seniors when the teacher candidates share materials and ideas they are learning about in their course work.
- Discussions with other MTs, who are working with seniors, coordinators, and Course Instructors help them think about ways to enhance the support they provide to seniors during the pre-internship year.

In short, MTs get some instructional support in the classroom that also contributes to the seniors' professional growth, while they are expanding their own professional learning.





An overview of what to expect when working with a junior or senior

Arrangements for Classroom Participation

- TE 301 teacher candidates spend 45 minutes per week in direct contact with a “child study” student, who could be accessed in a variety of settings (see above). They engage in activities related to literacy learning. They prepare for their interaction with their study child and analyze their work with the child using the remainder of the course time designated for field work. They begin this experience beginning about the third week in September for the fall semester and about the third week in January for the spring semester.
- TE 403/4/5/6 teacher candidates spend 4 hours per week in classrooms (usually beginning about the third week in September), typically in two-hour blocks on two different days of the week or one four hour block once a week. Field placement times are arranged between the teacher candidate and the MT in order to meet the requirements of the teacher candidate’s course and the schedule of the MT.
- Typically, between one and four teacher candidates are assigned to the same classroom, depending on what the Mentor Teacher prefers.

Teacher Candidates’ Responsibilities

TE 403, 404, 405, and 406 course instructors assign the teacher candidates several "field assignments" to complete while they are in the classroom that focus specifically on course related issues, such as particular subject matter areas for TE 403/4/5/6 (science, social studies, literacy, math).

TE 301 students engage their study child in literacy activities.

TE 403-406 (seniors) might be asked to plan and teach a subject-specific lesson, read a book to the class, work with small groups, assist children with individual work, assist with assessment activities, interview students, or collect and analyze students' written work. By the second semester seniors take on increasingly complex activities. Juniors and seniors coordinate course requirements and due dates with the ongoing classroom curriculum.

Course instructors also expect the seniors to become involved in the regular routines of the classroom as much as possible. For instance, they might take roll, escort children to the art or music room, help with playground duty, or assist in getting materials ready to be sent home.

Seniors arrange a time to meet on a regular basis with the Mentor Teacher to discuss their field assignments and options for their ongoing classroom participation. If the senior's schedule does not permit time to talk during the regular school day, arrangements should be made to either meet before or after school, or to converse on the telephone at a mutually agreeable time.

The TE program has firm expectations that juniors and seniors participate in their field placement on a regular basis.





Teacher candidates are expected to notify their course instructor, the Pre-Internship Coordinator, and their MT of any necessary absences ahead of time, and have to make up any missed field time.

Any unexcused absences greater than 2 (e.g., without timely communication with the instructor, pre-internship coordinator, and/or the Mentor Teacher, or absences without adequate reasons) from class or in the field is cause for concern. Recurring absences or tardiness will put the teacher candidate's recommendation for continuation in the program in jeopardy.

Teacher candidates will use the Attendance Field Log regularly. Teacher candidates will dress appropriately and professionally. They should check with the MT and follow what is typically expected of teachers in the building. Teacher candidates will follow the *Professional Conduct Policy for MSU Teacher Candidates* (see <http://education.msu.edu/academics/undergraduate/professional-conduct.asp>)

Course Instructors' Responsibilities

Instructors provide written information and a specific calendar of events to seniors and MTs regarding TE 403/4/5/6 course content and their expectations for field assignments. They also provide contact information (telephone, e-mail address) to the teacher candidate and MT.

Instructors help teacher candidates coordinate course requirements and due dates with the ongoing classroom curriculum.

Instructors respond to MTs' and teacher candidates' questions about course content or field assignments.

Instructors help prepare the teacher candidates to act professionally in the classroom and work in partnership with the MT to ensure a positive learning experience.

Pre-Internship Coordinator's Responsibilities

Coordinators make field placements for juniors who need help identifying a child study student and seniors enrolled in TE 403, TE 404, TE 405, and TE 406.

Coordinators foster communication among course instructors, MTs and teacher candidates.

Coordinators monitor field placement and trouble shoot any problems that arise in the field.

Mentor Teachers' Responsibilities

Mentor Teachers who work with juniors and/or seniors should be willing to discuss course content and expectations for field assignments and ongoing classroom participation with the Coordinator and/or Course Instructor. This is also an opportunity for MTs to give feedback and suggestions about course requirements.





MTs arrange a time to meet as needed with a junior or regularly with the senior to discuss course assignments and the teacher candidate's ongoing involvement in the classroom. Teacher candidates' schedules are very tight, so these regular meetings may need to take place before or after school, or on the telephone at a mutually agreeable time.

MSU seniors must be supervised at all times when working with children, having the MT or other school adult in the classroom at all times.

MTs should contact the Course Instructor with questions or problems related to course content or field assignments.

If other problems with a teacher candidate occur (e.g., attendance, punctuality) the Coordinator or Course Instructor should be contacted immediately.

MTs also are asked to fill out a feedback form about their teacher candidates' classroom participation, based on their observations and interactions with the teacher candidate and in accordance with the *Criteria for Progression to the Internship* (see Part D. <http://education.msu.edu/academics/undergraduate/criteria-for-progression.asp>). The Attendance Field Log should provide valuable information for the feedback form.

Use of an Attendance Field Log in the Classroom

The MT and teacher candidate will use a field log to keep track of attendance in the field placement classroom. The teacher candidate will bring to and maintain in the classroom an attendance log to be accessible to both the MT and the teacher candidate.

The teacher candidate is responsible for recording attendance (both arrival and departure time) for each day present in the classroom and for acquiring a ***MT signature for each day of attendance.***





Helping Teacher Candidates Get the Most out of their Field Experiences

In most cases, you will be working with a person who, quite understandably, has a student's habits of seeing, hearing, interpreting, and acting. That person needs both opportunities and help to start constructing a teacher's habits of seeing, hearing, interpreting, and acting. These suggestions begin with the first moment that the teacher candidate walks into your classroom to meet you.

Introduce the teacher candidate to your pupils as Mr. or Ms. _____, a "teacher candidate," someone who is preparing to be a teacher and who will be working with you for the next few months.

Keep the candidate near you, in a teacher's place rather than a student's place, where you can easily and quickly say something to the candidate, hand the candidate something, ask the candidate something, or tell the candidate to do something. This will help to put the candidate into the role of an apprentice or junior colleague who needs to see, hear, and think like a teacher. This useful interaction can go on even in 10-second moments of time.

Tell and show the candidate what's going on in your mind. As students, teacher candidates have watched and listened to teachers for thousands of hours. Seldom will they have had any similar opportunity to learn what teachers think about while they are teaching. Show the candidate whatever you have in the way of curriculum and plans. Tell the candidate your immediate goals, or alternatives that you are considering. Let the candidate know when you've done something that you would be proud to repeat, or that you wish you had done another way.

Ask the candidate to tell you what s/he is reading, discussing, doing in the TE classes. As you listen to the response, you probably will hear opportunities to help the candidate connect what s/he is studying with what s/he is seeing, hearing, and doing in your class and school.

Get the candidate involved with students in small ways. Give the candidate the class list to memorize. Ask the candidate to work with particular students or small groups by tutoring, listening to students read, studying their work, etc. In this way the candidate can work up to the teaching assignments they will receive in TE 401 and TE 402.

Give small pieces of your work to the candidate, with supervision. For example, ask the candidate to help you monitor seatwork, group work, lab work, or work in activity centers. Or, ask the candidate to help you respond to students' written work. As you assign such tasks, tell the candidate what you'll be looking for and doing, so that the candidate can try to do likewise.

Ask the candidate to observe students closely. Teacher candidates need to build an informed and empathetic idea of the diversity of students in typical classrooms. Candidates can do this by keeping an eye on particular students as the





semester progresses, working with them regularly, keeping a collection of the students' work, keeping a journal of their interactions with the selected students, etc.

Ask the candidate to take observation and note-taking breaks. It can be hard to make sense of what's going on at the same time as you're trying to play (an unfamiliar) part in it. Frequently, teacher candidates will have course assignments that require them to gather information from your class. Ask the candidate to take periodic breaks to observe, reflect, analyze, and write notes.

Anticipate and arrange opportunities for the candidate to teach, in small chunks. For TE 401 and TE 402, teacher candidates usually have assignments to plan and teach a short unit, or a sequence of lessons of different types or on different topics. Instructors should send you descriptions of these assignments. You are welcome to comment to the instructor on those assignments. By anticipating these assignments and planning ahead with the teacher candidate, you best can make the assignment work out for you and for your class.

Share the professional norms of your school. In every school, the staff more or less shares some ideas about how members of the staff should (and should not) act or interact. These norms are not highly visible to students. You can help the candidate to notice these norms both by giving your own account of them and by arranging opportunities for the candidate to ask other staff members about them.

The Teacher Candidate should:

Take an active interest in the school class:

- make a map of the classroom—furniture ,equipment, supplies
- learn the students' names
- prepare questions to discuss with the MT during planning/lunch time or after school
- observe lessons and ask questions about them
- survey the curriculum and instructional materials for the class
- keep a journal or log about their participation in the class

Work with and observe students:

- observe, interact with, and examine the written work of two or three students over time
- observe and analyze how students get along with each other and with adults in the classroom, hallways, school grounds
- help students to practice skills
- monitor and help students in group work or seat work
- work with students at computers, in labs, or at activity centers

Take on small parts of the teacher's work, with supervision:





- complete classroom routines like taking attendance or lunch counts, collecting and distributing papers, etc.
- respond to student journals
- grade papers with direction from the MT
- locate, gather, prepare, label instructional materials
- prepare or help to prepare a bulletin board
- help plan and make arrangements for a field trip
- observe the class to gather data that the Mentor Teacher wants (decide on a particular focus ahead of time)
- in lower grades, assist students in getting their coats and shoes on, lining up, walking from place to place, etc.

With guidance and assistance, teach small group or whole class lessons:

- develop and lead an opening or closing activity
- plan and provide a presentation within a lesson
- in lower grades, prepare and read a story or book chapter, plan and teach a get-to-know-you activity, or lead singing
- co-plan a lesson with the Mentor Teacher
- co-teach lessons with the Mentor Teacher

In TE 403, 404, 405, and 406, plan and teach a short unit, series of lessons, or set of lessons:

- the assignment will be given by the TE 403, 404, 405 or 406 instructor
- you can help by consulting with the candidate about the unit and/or lesson plans, and by providing feedback on the lessons when they have been taught

Become acquainted with the school and its staff:

- visit the school office, and talk with the principal, assistant principal, or secretary
- visit the school library or media center, talk with the media specialist, and observe students working there
- visit the teacher's workroom, and learn about the equipment available to teachers in the school
- read the school's policies on attendance, safety, discipline, referrals to service, contacts with parents, etc.





Core Mentoring Practices

Research has shown that the practices in which effective mentors engage are varied and complex, and they are adaptable to the novice's learning needs. The following ideas are drawn from Sharon Feiman-Nemser's article (Feiman-Nemser, S. [2001]. Helping novices learn to teach: Lessons from an exemplary support teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 17-30). They serve as a set of core mentoring practices from which to draw. As in any teaching and learning relationship, these practices are based on the assumption that both mentor (Mentor Teacher) and novice (teacher candidate) are active participants, and the use of these practices will be adapted to the local situation and the teacher candidate's learning needs.

Experienced mentors know that it takes time and effort to develop mentoring practices, and that talking with fellow mentors about those practices is an important source for their own professional growth. As with all teaching situations, mentors need to be open to asking questions, stating uncertainties, and learning in and from their practice.

Core Mentoring Practices	The Mentor Teacher's Responsibility	The Teacher Candidate's Responsibility
Finding openings for conversation	The Mentor Teacher finds topics to talk about that are important to the novice and that are fruitful to talk about because they bring up basic issues that teachers need to think about carefully and thoroughly.	The novice notices these invitations to conversation; assumes that the mentor might be trying to raise questions, issues and options that the teacher candidate has not thought about; and makes note of key issues raised.
Framing problems	The Mentor Teacher helps the novice to decide what to treat as relevant in a situation. This helps the novice to make situations manageable by setting some boundaries on what is paid attention; it also helps the novice to see that teachers have choices in the way they define "problems", and therefore have choices about how to find potential "solutions".	The teacher candidate keeps in mind that the MT's framing of the situation can be both different from theirs and useful to him/her. The teacher candidate pay attention to the MT's reasoning behind the framing of the problem, and discusses alternative frames with the MT.
Probing novices' thinking	The Mentor Teacher finds out how the novice is thinking about a situation by asking him/her to elaborate on an initial statement or explanation, and may also extend the novice's thinking by asking the intern to think about an area that was not initially considered.	The novice responds by trying to be frank and clear about her or his thinking; by reporting incomplete, tentative, and potentially invalid rationales without worrying about being "right" or "wrong"; and by listening for the hints that sometimes come in questions.
Noticing signs of growth	The Mentor Teacher acknowledges and compliments the novice on specific aspects of her/his teaching, explicitly talking about what the novice did and can do.	The novice listens carefully for the content of the compliment. The mentor may be talking about a different aspect of the performance than the novice thought was important.





<p>Focusing on the kids</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher helps the novice to focus attention on students' thinking and sense making in addition to more formal assessments, and to use information about students' thinking as a source of feedback on teaching, a way to keep track of children's learning, and a source of ideas for curriculum development.</p>	<p>The novice accepts that s/he must learn to put an interest in students' learning before a concern for her or his own performance in the classroom, or his or her own interests, and tries to reason from the former to the latter. The novice uses information about children to inform ongoing instruction.</p>
<p>Reinforcing an understanding of theory</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher connects specific examples of children's sense-making to research and theory, so as to help novices develop broad perspectives for looking at and thinking about their work.</p>	<p>The teacher candidate recognized the mentor's cue to connect a given case with relevant research and theory, and starts to think actively about potential connections with research and theory that the teacher candidate has studied.</p>
<p>Giving living examples of one person's way of teaching</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher models a set of teaching practices, thinking aloud so the novice can both observe the mentor's actions and understand how the mentor thinks about those actions in situations. This set of practices is viewed and discussed as one of many possibilities for developing a practice that is consistent with the program standards.</p>	<p>The novice listens carefully to the mentor think-aloud, in order to see and hear the part or aspect of practice that the mentor is trying to show. The novice also may need to discipline of listening and observing as distinct from judging. The novice takes responsibility for deciding when and how to try to emulate the MT's particular set of teaching practices.</p>
<p>Modeling wondering about teaching</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher models a set of teaching practices, thinking aloud so the novice can both observe the mentor's actions and understand how the mentor thinks about those actions in situations. This set of practices is viewed and discussed as one of many possibilities for developing a practice that is consistent with the program standards.</p>	<p>The teacher candidate recognizes that the mentor is trying to reveal the invisible mental work behind the visible work of teaching in a classroom, and seizes the opportunity to discover how someone else thinks about events in the classroom. The novice exerts curiosity.</p>
<p>Goal setting</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher takes an active role in helping the novice to articulate goals for growth and to assess progress in working toward those goals; the mentor offers and suggests potential areas of growth to the novice.</p>	<p>The teacher candidate agrees that it is important to hold goals for one's own growth, tries to set them, and involves the mentor in helping to assess growth toward the goal.</p>
<p>Problem solving</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher joins the novice in framing problems of teaching practice, identifying a range of potential solutions, and discussing whether problems are resolved.</p>	<p>The teacher candidate recognizes that situations in the classroom can be framed differently, and explores others' framing and suggested solutions in relation to his or her own.</p>
<p>Co-planning and co-teaching</p>	<p>The Mentor Teacher joins the novice in unit and lesson planning, and in carrying out those plans in the classroom, aims to help the novice to understand the knowledge and thinking that informs the planning, to guide the novice in using effective strategies throughout the planning and teaching process.</p>	<p>The teacher candidate is alert to recognize both what can be said about teaching and what can be shown by action in the classroom. The intern takes initiative to be an active participant in the co-planning and co-teaching processes, according to his/her readiness and the agreements made with the MT.</p>



