

## The Early Days of Student Teaching

### Introduction

During the initial stage, there is a need for the student teacher and the cooperating teacher to establish a personal working relationship.

- ◆ What are you both like, in and out of school?
- ◆ What educational beliefs do each of you hold?
- ◆ What interests do you have in common?

Taking the time to develop rapport can lay a strong foundation for a cooperative working relationship. One important fact to remember during this early phase is that the cooperating teacher is the main teacher. The student teacher should not be left alone for more than short periods at this point.

### Assuming Teaching Responsibilities

The rate at which the student teacher assumes the teaching load should be based on a mutual agreement between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher with input from the University Coordinator on occasion. Assigning full responsibility for the classroom should be a gradual process. A schedule should be established that will be sufficiently flexible to allow for unexpected changes or interruptions. The cooperating teacher will provide considerable guidance and direction as the student teacher's responsibilities are increased.

### Arrival of the Student Teacher: Cooperating Teacher

1. Provide assistance to the student teacher in answering the **Know Your School** questions (see Appendix N Forms);
2. Provide copies of seating charts so the student teacher can learn to associate names and faces;
3. Provide books, materials, and a personal desk space for the use of the student teacher;
4. Share your routines and discipline methods with the student teacher;
5. Share your expectations of what the student teacher is to do while in your classroom, i.e., what time to arrive at school, appropriate dress, extracurricular activities and meetings to be attended, activities that he or she should begin to assume, etc;
6. When problems and situations arise that are familiar to you, but not to the student teacher, orient the student teacher about how to handle these situations as they occur;
7. Orient the student teacher about reports to parents and parent conferences.

### Phasing into Teaching: Student Teacher and Cooperating Teacher

**I. Observing.** It is difficult for the student teacher to sit and watch for extended periods of time. Here are some suggestions for the student teacher on how to make it worthwhile.

- A. Observe what the teacher does:
  1. How does the teacher start the lesson? How does he or she capture students' interest?
  2. How does the teacher make the purpose and relevance of the lesson apparent?
  3. What procedures are incorporated into the body of the lesson?
  4. What materials were used in the lesson?
  5. What is the teacher's style of teaching?
  6. How was the lesson effective?
  7. What provisions were made for individual differences?
  8. What disciplinary techniques does the teacher use?
  9. How does the teacher end the lesson?
  10. What evaluation techniques were selected?
- B. Observe the students:
  1. To what extent did the students participate in the class?
  2. Was there a balance between teacher-oriented and student-oriented activities?
  3. How well do students interact with each other?

**II. Initial Teaching Responsibilities.** This refers to various early teaching experiences that take only a portion of the class period and are relatively easy to accomplish. Here are just a few of the numerous possibilities:

- A. Show a film/video;
- B. Read a story;
- C. Do a demonstration;
- D. Work with a small group;
- E. Monitor student work for those needing help;
- F. Help a student who was absent catch up;
- G. Sponge activities;
- H. Play a learning game;
- I. Make a presentation;
- J. Make an activity;
- K. Grade a set of papers or do a re-teaching activity for those who need it.

### **Planning: Student Teacher**

**One of the most important factors for successful student teaching is the willingness to plan in detail.** Detailed lesson plans should be available for each lesson taught.

### **The Role of the Cooperating Teacher**

The importance of the cooperating teacher's role in the student teaching experience cannot be emphasized enough. The collaborative efforts between the university and the schools are critical to the success of field experiences. Regular communication between the University Coordinator and cooperating teacher are often necessary. Both the cooperating teacher and the University Coordinator will make observations on a regular basis.

**I. Orientation:** During the first week, the student teacher will receive the following:

- A. Copies of seating charts so the student teacher can learn to associate student names and faces;
- B. Books, materials and a personal desk space for use of the student teacher;
- C. Information about routines and discipline methods;
- D. Expectations of what the student teacher is to do while in the classroom, i.e., what time to arrive at school, appropriate dress, extracurricular activities and meetings to be attended, activities that he or she should begin to assume, etc;
- E. Orientation about how to handle problem situations as they occur;
- F. Orientation about reports to parents and parent conferences.

**II. Planning:** The student teacher will be aware of:

- A. Descriptions of the subject matter that will be taught and what aspects of the program the student teacher will be responsible for implementing;
- B. Suggestions and tips for preparing learning activities and materials;
- C. An idea of what has happened to date in the educational life of the pupils;
- D. Aid in generating the broad goals, which must be reached in curricular areas, and in identifying resource materials, which must be gathered for use in various units. Most student teachers start teaching by preparing a single lesson in a single subject area. They may work to modify the cooperating teacher's plan or develop their own. The student teacher's plans need to include as a minimum:
  1. clearly stated goals and objectives;
  2. identification of resources needed;
  3. a description of teaching activities with an approximate time table;
  4. a description of evaluation techniques for the lesson;
  5. a statement of assignments for students; and
  6. space for the student teacher to note an assessment of the lesson plan.

**III. Discussion :** The cooperating teacher will discuss the following with the student teacher:

- A. Opportunities to watch skilled, experienced teachers teach a lesson and a chance to observe how students teach and respond;
- B. Feedback to the student teacher as a result of watching them teach and interact with students;
- C. The importance of observation continues throughout the entire student teaching experience. Some cooperating teachers may use a journal approach in which they jot down observations during a lesson along with suggestions on observed strengths and improvement.

- IV. Conferencing:** The follow up conferences between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher should include:
- A. Opportunities to talk about what the student teacher is doing, why the student teacher is doing it, and how things are going. These informal conferences should occur frequently.
  - B. Opportunities for regularly scheduled formal conferences. These should be planned for at least once or twice a week. Each person should feel free to request additional conferences when the need arises.

### **Role of the University Coordinator**

The Central Michigan University Coordinator is a faculty member in the Department of Teacher Education and Professional Development and serves as coordinator of the teacher education program's student teaching field experience in the classrooms and schools in each student teaching center.

The University Coordinator is expected to work collaboratively with **public school personnel** to:

1. Communicate the field experience program and the teacher education programs and policies of TEPD, the College of Education and Human Services and the University to the K-12 school community;
2. Recognize and follow policies established by the school in which student teachers are placed;
3. Visit cooperating teachers and administrators to discuss the progress of student teachers;
4. Provide strategies for evaluative feedback related to the student teaching experience for cooperating teachers;
5. Provide evaluative feedback related to University Coordinator observations for cooperating teachers;
6. Provide formative and summative evaluations for student teachers;
7. Assist and advise concerning problems involving student teachers during their field experiences;
8. Support the student teaching field experience in a tactful and positive manner;
9. Provide or acquire in-service experiences or consulting services, when requested, for administrators, cooperating teachers and other public school personnel;
10. Recognize public school personnel in various ways for services rendered.

The University Coordinator is expected to work collaboratively with **student teachers** to:

1. Secure appropriate student teaching placements and continuously evaluate the environment in which the student teacher has been placed;
2. Communicate effectively with each student teacher regarding placements, schedules, meetings, observations, visitations, and evaluations;
3. Effectively teach courses designated by TEPD as an integral part of the field experience to enhance the transfer of theory to practice;
4. Formally observe and document the progress of each student teacher a minimum of six times in sixteen weeks and effectively collaborate with the cooperating teacher in the evaluative process (*eight week placement observations-three to four times and special education observations-four to five times*);
5. In addition, informally visit each placement as often as necessary to provide suggestions, recommendations and solutions regarding problems confronting the student teacher or cooperating teacher;
6. Conference with student teachers and cooperating teachers after each formal observation to provide positive feedback and suggestions for improvement;
7. Act as a mentor/coach for assigned student teachers;
8. Provide quality orientation experiences for student teachers and cooperating teachers;
9. Provide diverse experiences during the student teaching semester.

### **Observations: University Coordinator and Student Teacher**

Most observations are pre-planned with the student teacher and the cooperating teacher being aware of the date and time of the expected visit. At the conclusion of each observation, the University Coordinator conferences with the student teacher. The University Coordinator frequently asks the student for his or her self-evaluation first. Together, they also generally review the effectiveness of the lesson based upon the essentials for effective instruction. In addition, the University Coordinator and the student teacher will discuss classroom management, strengths and weaknesses, and alternative classroom strategies.

### **Conferencing: Cooperating Teacher and Student Teacher**

The conference provides a designated time for both the cooperating teacher and student teacher to explore areas of interest and concern. To provide for an effective conference, the following guidelines may prove helpful:

1. Schedule specific times for regular, frequent conferences;
2. Discuss situations while still fresh in one's mind;
3. Share the responsibilities for preparing conference materials/agendas;
4. Plan regularly for specific conference topics;
5. Keep documentation of conference results;
6. Treat all problems, no matter how seemingly insignificant, in a professional manner;

7. Allow for honest differences of opinion;
8. Maintain a tension-free conference climate;
9. Treat all conferences as a useful tool in the development of the student teacher;
10. Help the student teacher to become self-directive, self-evaluative.

Evaluation of the student teacher should be a continuous and cooperative process. A student teacher is entitled to know at regular intervals how they are progressing. If the evaluations are done continuously, cooperatively and constructively, the student teacher will have greater insight into their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. Here are some suggestions to **CONSIDER:**

1. *The first conference will be used to become acquainted and to help the student teacher adjust to the new environment.* This should take place at the earliest possible time. While it may be necessary to repeat some information later, this is a time for both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher to outline their expectations for the experience and test them against those of the other. If possible, the University Coordinator should be included so that all parties understand the goals as outlined, and are in a position to deal with any small problems which may arise. At this point, problems should be small enough to be easily handled. Left unchecked, they could escalate out of proportion.
2. *Parts of several early conferences will be spent on an overview of the past work of the class, showing how the present work fits into the long-range plan.*
3. *Conference time will also be used to help the student teacher learn more about the students in the classroom.* Family background information and help in locating cumulative records may be beneficial to the student teacher.
4. *Conferences will occur in order to help the student teacher develop methods of observation.* This is due to the fact that they will be spending a considerable amount of time observing the cooperating teacher at the very beginning. For this to be a meaningful experience, the observations should be discussed in a conference.
5. *Another important period spent in conferences will be devoted to planning.* Learning to plan lessons effectively is one of the most important skills student teachers have to develop. One of the most difficult phases in learning to plan is to realize that the plan must be based upon clearly identified learning objectives. Student teachers sometimes fail to look beyond the subject matter involved in planning with the result that they spend much time with “what” and not enough on “how to”. Before the student teacher has begun to take responsibility for the class, both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher will wish to discuss the cooperating teacher’s lesson plans so that the student teacher will better understand purposes as they observe the cooperating teacher teaching. When the student teacher begins to teach, the cooperating teacher will want to discuss plans and assist the student teacher with improvement of the lesson plans.
6. *The cooperating teacher will help the student teacher develop a number of teaching skills, such as questioning, leading discussions, locating information, and helping children learn.* Conference time will be needed for the cooperating teacher to give guidance in these areas.
7. *Conference time will be required to evaluate the work of the pupils cooperatively and to help the student teacher develop the ability to recognize and measure pupil progress.* The student teacher will need help in understanding the philosophy and standards to be met in the evaluation of pupils, and in reporting progress to parents.
8. *It is important to listen to the student teacher’s personal problems.*
9. *A conference is worthwhile before or after extra-class activity.* The student teacher needs to be aware of why the activity is important.
10. *A major purpose of conferences is regular and continuous evaluation of the student teacher’s work.*
  - A. *Decide with the student teacher what is to be evaluated.* What is to be evaluated will be determined by the policies of the school system as well as the university’s procedures. Within this framework, however, wide latitude for individual preference is allowed. One may wish to stress, for example, such things as planning and teaching skills, relationships, classroom management, personal qualities and characteristics or professional attitudes and abilities.
  - B. *The evaluation will be a continuous process which helps the student teacher evaluate his/her own progress.* Ask the student teacher such questions as: What seemed to go well? What should have been changed? How did you make transitions from one part of the lesson to another? How did you modify the lesson to meet the interests of the children with whom you were working? What could have been done to improve this lesson?
  - C. *Evaluation with the student teacher will be done throughout the entire placement period.* The cooperating teacher will have frequent formal and informal evaluation conferences with the student teacher. The final goal is to have an effective teacher who, because of their student teaching experiences, has started on the road to becoming a professional educator.
  - D. *The development of the student teacher’s self-concept as a professional educator is of extreme importance.* Consequently, the student teacher should have an active part in the evaluative procedures. It is extremely important that the evaluation procedures take place in an open and cooperative manner. It will be a shared responsibility.
  - E. *Identify the difference between the use of evaluation procedures for the developmental growth of the student teacher and the type of information which a prospective employer might wish to know about the student as a teacher.* Written evaluations serve at least two purposes. On one hand, the evaluations are used for purposes of self-development. On the other hand, they are administrative devices for placement records. The written evaluations represent a comprehensive picture, not only of the student teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, but of their professional desires and potential as well. The cooperating teacher will want to seek help from a variety of sources as one records the

development of the student teacher. For example, discuss the evaluations with the student teacher and principal, but, in some cases, secure pupil evaluations of the student teacher as well. The University Coordinator can be a valuable aid in helping evaluate the student teacher.

### **Seminars: Student Teacher and University Coordinator**

Concurrent with their student teaching experience, students assigned to each center are enrolled in a three credit semester-long seminar. A seminar schedule will be provided by the University Coordinator. All students are expected to attend ALL seminar sessions and complete the assigned work. This is a three (3) credit hour professional education course and **MUST** be passed with a C+ or better. **Special education majors completing the general education portion of their student teaching experience are required to attend all seminars during the 16-week period.**

The content of this seminar is directly related to issues being faced as part of the student teaching experience. Topics such as unit and lesson planning, classroom management, meeting diverse needs of students, becoming a reflective practitioner, and finding a teaching position after graduation are a few of the components of this program. A complete syllabus for EDU432 and EDU458 are located in Appendix A.

### **Subject Matter Specialists**

During your first seminar, your University Coordinator will provide you with information regarding subject matter specialist visits. **This will affect secondary and K-12 certification students only.**