

Cooperating Teachers' Guidelines and Expectations



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A student teacher may approach the student teaching experience with a high degree of apprehension, concern, and even anxiety. Research indicates that a key component for developing the skills of a professional teacher is the student teacher's effective interaction with his or her cooperating teacher. Consequently, the influence of the cooperating teacher is crucial throughout the student teaching experience.

The cooperating teacher offers the greatest help when s/he provides an environment that fosters excellent classroom management procedures, exemplifies effective teaching and learning strategies, encourages creative and innovative techniques, supports continued growth of the student teacher, and engenders confidence in the ability to function effectively as teachers.

SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF COOPERATING TEACHERS

The process for the selection and preparation of a cooperating teacher has been developed in tandem with local area schools that serve as partner schools for field placements. The University supervisor is at the school site for an extended period of time so that individual questions or concerns can be jointly addressed on site and in a timely manner.

A teacher is selected and assigned as a cooperating teacher based upon the following criteria:

- At least three years of teaching experience, one of which is in the school the teacher candidate is assigned
- A teaching assignment appropriate to the subject competency of the teacher candidate
- Participated in an overview of the responsibilities and skills conducted by the university for the cooperating teacher

The supervisor provides the following training for the cooperating teacher:

- An orientation meeting for all teachers in the partner school serving as cooperating teachers
- An orientation meeting with the school principal on the requirements and expectations of the Susquehanna University teacher preparation program
- A copy of the guidelines for cooperating teachers
- Scheduled meetings with cooperating teachers to provide individual feedback on evaluation and observation techniques

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER

- ESTABLISH A SERIES OF REGULARLY PLANNED CONFERENCES THAT MAINTAIN ONGOING DIALOGUE:
 - ✓ Initial conferences focus on role clarification and expectations, procedures of the classroom and school day, information about supplies, and daily lesson planning.
 - ✓ Developmental conferences should include discussion of specific lesson plans, reactions to specific lessons taught, analysis for teaching skills and evaluation of performance, long range planning, student behavior and classroom management strategies, and personal concerns of the student teachers.
 - ✓ Summary conferences should emphasize the growth that has occurred, areas needing attention and development, and a review of final evaluations.
- When appropriate, suggest ideas to the student teacher before his/her student teaching experience, rather than reactively commenting and providing feedback only after the fact.
- Model behaviors, teaching techniques, and attitudes recommended to the student teacher.

- Employ positive problem-solving approaches. Ask your student teacher to share input on teaching problems.
- Encourage innovation and creativity.
- Set up a desk or place where your student teacher can put his/her materials.
- Accept the student teacher as a colleague.
- Assist in the student teacher's transition from college student to teacher.
- Keep notes of oral and written evaluations.
- Identify problems as well as strategies for improvement.
- Confer with the University supervisor after each visit, if possible.
- Contact the University supervisor immediately should an issue or potential crisis arise.
- Complete the mid-term and final evaluation forms collaboratively with the University supervisor.
- Participate in cooperating teachers' training meetings and programs sponsored by the Susquehanna Department of Education.
- Stress that the student teacher must follow the schedule of the host school. S/he shall attend all in-service or professional development meetings with the cooperating teacher in addition to his/her university seminars.
- Involve the student teacher as soon as possible in hall duties, taking attendance, etc.
- Collaborate with the student teacher in planning the steps of the student teacher's progress towards assuming the full teaching load for a period of at least two weeks.
- Leave the classroom occasionally for brief periods to permit the student teacher to establish him or herself with students. As the student teacher gains expertise, s/he may be left alone more often and for longer periods.
- When it is necessary to Intercede in classroom activities, do so without usurping the leadership role of the student teacher.
- Introduce administrative, instructional, and support staff to the student teacher as soon as possible.

These guidelines describe the major roles and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher. Nevertheless, other concerns may surface at any time throughout the student-teaching semester. Should any questions or issues arise, the cooperating teacher should contact the Susquehanna University Department of Education supervisor as quickly as possible. We recognize that the cooperating teacher is a vital component in the preparation of future educators, and we hope that the semester is professionally enhancing and rewarding for them.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR OBSERVATIONS

The cooperating teacher may select items from the following list to be a specific focus of observation by his/her student teacher. These observations should be followed up with discussion.

Giving directions	Transitions
Cooperative learning groups	Timing
Information presentations	Reinforcement techniques
Questioning formats	Resource material usage
Assigned practice	Pupil grouping
Percentage of teacher/student talk time	Language usage – student teacher
Rapport with the students	Leadership of student teacher
Handling interruptions	Multi-group management
Individual acting-out reactions	Non-attending pupils
Discipline statements	Non-teaching duties
Disruptive behavior management	Use of hands-on activities

EVALUATION PROCESS

The purpose of evaluation is to help the student teacher grow in teaching competence and self-direction. The cooperating teacher has the opportunity to offer constructive criticism whenever the student teacher submits a lesson plan, completes a duty, or teaches a lesson. The cooperating teacher should guide the discussions so that the student teacher will understand the assessment, acknowledge why certain strategies worked effectively, and recognize what techniques were weak and how to overcome the deficiencies. Undoubtedly, most student teachers need and want continuous feedback from their cooperating teachers – as long as the feedback is realistic and supportive. Self-evaluation, basic to good teaching, is also a requirement of the student teaching experience, and should be modeled and encouraged by the cooperating teacher.

The cooperating teacher should maintain an anecdotal record of his/her student teacher's activities from their first day in the classroom. This aids in bringing to mind the particular strengths and weaknesses of the student teacher. Moreover, it provides a solid format for conferences between the cooperating teacher and the University supervisor.

The cooperating teacher will collaborate with the University supervisor to complete two formal evaluations of the student teacher during the semester: a "Midterm Evaluation" and a "Final Evaluation" in addition to final grades.

COOPERATING TEACHER STIPEND

In appreciation for their effort in preparing Susquehanna future teachers a stipend is provided to the cooperating teacher.

COOPERATING TEACHER LIABILITY

Is a cooperating teacher liable for negligence occurring during their absence from the classroom when he/she leaves the student teacher in charge? The answer has gradually changed from an emphatic "no" to a "probably not."

A safe guideline to follow is that the cooperating teacher should instruct the student teacher in detail about safety rules, school procedures, appropriate classroom management, and professional ethics. Negligence exists only if an incompetent student teacher is left in charge.

The best advice is to exercise good common sense, to be prudent, and to be certain the student teacher is aware of the district policies regarding safety rules and standard school procedures.

USING STUDENT TEACHERS AS SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

In July 1975, the Bureau of Academic Programs for the Pennsylvania Department of Education circulated to all teacher-training institutions the Teacher Education Memorandum # 14. A part of the memorandum was a section dealing with the question regarding student teachers being used as substitute teachers. The following excerpt explains the State's position on this practice:

A substitute teacher must hold a valid Pennsylvania certificate to teach in Pennsylvania public schools. Since student teachers normally do not hold a valid certificate, their assignment as substitute teachers violates the school code. Teacher educators involved with student teacher assignments may find themselves in legal jeopardy if the student teacher does not hold a valid certificate.

The excerpt above emphasizes that in the absence of the cooperating teacher, certified individuals should accompany the student teacher. These persons could be substitutes or other

teachers or administrators in the school system. These designated individuals then assume legal responsibility for the class.

Necessary Forms

The following documents may be downloaded from the Education Department's website at <http://www.susqu.edu> by clicking on the link to "Forms & Downloads."

- **Application Packet**
 - ✓ A letter from the head of the department
 - ✓ The application form
 - ✓ A checklist of requirements for admission to the Teacher-Education Program
 - ✓ Two copies of the recommendation form

- **Externship Approval Forms**

- **Student-Teacher Evaluation Form**