



Cooperating Teachers' Guidelines and Expectations

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Cooperating Teachers

Student teachers 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 cooperating teachers is crucial throughout the student teaching experience.

Cooperating teachers offer the greatest help when they provide 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 teachers, 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 cooperating teachers has been developed in tandem with local area schools that serve as partner schools for field placements. Teachers are selected and assigned as cooperating teachers based upon the following criteria:

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

The University supervisor provides the following training for cooperating teachers:

- An orientation seminar 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 "Handbook" and guidelines for cooperating teachers
- Scheduled meetings with cooperating teachers to provide individual feedback on evaluation and observation techniques

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATING TEACHERS

- Welcome the student teacher into your classroom:
 - Set up a desk or place where your student teacher can put materials.
 - 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
 - Introduce administrative, instructional, and support staff to the student teacher as soon as possible.
- 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.
 - Confer with the University supervisor after each visit, if possible.

- Evaluate the student teacher's performance:
 - When appropriate, suggest ideas to student teachers during the planning phase, rather than reactively commenting and providing feedback only after the fact.
 - Employ positive problem-solving approaches. Ask your student teacher to share input on teaching problems.
 - Encourage innovation and creativity.
 - Keep notes of oral evaluations and copies of written evaluations.
 - Identify strategies for improvement as well as problems.
 - 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.
- Teach professionalism:
 - Model behaviors, teaching techniques, and attitudes recommended to student teachers.
 - Accept student teachers as colleagues.
 - Assist in the student teacher's transition from college student to teacher.
 - Stress that student teachers must follow the schedule of the host school. They shall attend all in-service or professional development meetings with the cooperating teachers in addition to their university seminars.
 - When it is necessary to intercede in classroom activities, do so without usurping the leadership role of the student teacher.
 - Involve the student teachers as soon as possible in hall duties, taking attendance, etc.
 - Leave the classroom occasionally for brief periods to permit the student teachers to establish themselves with their students. As the student teacher gains expertise, he or she may be left alone more often and for longer periods.
- Participate in cooperating teachers' training meetings and programs sponsored by the Susquehanna Department of Education.

These guidelines describe the major roles and responsibilities of cooperating teachers. Nevertheless, other concerns may surface at any time throughout the student-teaching semester. Should any questions or issues arise, cooperating teachers should contact the Susquehanna University Department of Education as quickly as possible. We recognize that cooperating teachers are 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

In addition to teaching and assisting in the cooperating teacher's classroom, student teachers observe in a variety of classrooms. Cooperating teachers can help their student teachers fine-tune their understanding of the teaching and managing skills that teachers employ by directing the student teacher to focus observations on elements such as the following items. 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 student teachers grow in teaching competence and self-direction. Cooperating teachers have the opportunity to offer constructive criticisms whenever student teachers submit a lesson plan, complete a duty, or teach a lesson. They should guide the discussions so that the student teachers 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.

Cooperating teachers should maintain an anecdotal record of their 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 cooperating teachers and the University supervisor.

Cooperating teachers will collaborate with the University supervisor to complete two formal evaluations of student teachers during the semester: a midterm evaluation and a final evaluation. These evaluations will be recorded on both the PDE 430 and the SU student-teaching evaluation form.

COOPERATING TEACHERS STIPEND

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

COOPERATING TEACHERS' LIABILITY

Are cooperating teachers liable for negligence occurring during their absence from the classroom when they leave student teachers in charge? The answer is "probably not." A safe guideline to follow is that the cooperating teachers instruct their student teachers in detail about safety rules, school procedures, appropriate classroom management, and professional ethics. Negligence exists only if incompetent student teachers are left in charge.

The best advice is to exercise good common sense, to be prudent, and to be certain the student teachers are 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. Included in 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 cooperating teachers, certified individuals should accompany the student teachers. These persons could be substitutes or other teachers or administrators in the school system. These designated individuals then assume legal responsibility for the class.