

Role of the Cooperating Teacher

No teacher preparation program could claim success without the vital assistance of the cooperating teachers. Their role in the student teaching experience is indeed a critical one. No other person in the program can duplicate the value of the day-to-day contact that they have with student teachers. Cooperating teachers are experienced professionals, competent in their teaching area with a commitment to their students and learning in general. They identify the apprehensions, concerns, and joys that a student teacher will experience, giving encouragement and feedback on a regular basis.

In order for the student teaching experience to accomplish its purpose in developing the competencies to meet the standards set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is imperative that the cooperating teachers understand the University's Education program and help us in the final attainment of the program's outcomes. It is understood that by accepting one of our students, you are agreeing to help us in this endeavor. To accomplish these expectations, cooperating teachers will need to be aware of the outcome expectations of our program. They must also assume a role that is administrative, supervisory, collegial, and supportive. Clarification of these roles follows, but questions and dialogue concerning them is encouraged.

Cooperating Teacher as Colleague

Building a climate of collegiality will ease your student teacher in making the transition from "student" to "teacher." Treat the student teacher as a professional, and do not tolerate anything other than professional behavior from the student teacher. You can function as a collegial cooperating teacher by doing the following:

- Introduce the student teacher to the social dynamics within the school, but be aware that student teachers are not to get involved in internal school politics.
- Introduce the student teacher to support personnel and explain how they impact the functioning of the school
- Familiarize the student teacher with the location / operating of copy machines, AV equipment, educational materials, computer areas, etc.
- Listen actively and reflectively. Know that your student teacher's growth, like that of your students, is incremental, gradual, and personal.
- Provide opportunities for your student teacher to practice new skills in a low-risk setting. Suggest methodologies, strategies, and materials freely as a means of increasing your student teacher's repertoire of available options. Allow your student teacher to experiment with new methodologies and strategies, if well-planned.
- Make your student teacher feel like a contributing member of the faculty. Allow your student teacher to interact with other teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and parents.
- Allow the student teacher to share classroom anxieties and triumphs with you regularly

Cooperating Teacher as Mentor

Continuous feedback is crucial for your student teacher's improvement and refinement of necessary skills. You will be expected to provide feedback by observing, conferring with, and assessing the student teacher. The continuous feedback should facilitate self-evaluation and self-improvement by the student teacher. You can be an effective mentor by doing the following:

- Review, suggest improvements for, and sign lesson plans at least three days prior to the student teacher's implementing the lesson. Your signature indicates that the plan is acceptable to use for teaching. No planning or poor planning by the student teacher means that he or she should not teach the lesson.
- Observe the teaching of the student teacher. Conference with him or her soon after the observation. This conference gives the cooperating teacher an opportunity to give valuable feedback to the student teacher about his or her performance. This is the time to indicate the strong points of the lesson, to point out the weak points of the lesson, and to question segments of the lesson that were not clearly understood by students. Give specific suggestions about performance in the classroom.
- Assess the student teacher's performance.
 - Complete at least four Student Teacher Observation Forms, focusing on a single lesson
 - Complete a mid-term evaluation, focusing on overall performance
 - Complete a final evaluation, focusing on overall performance
- Assign the student teacher to teaching responsibilities beginning with a single course, with more eventually being added at the discretion of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. This should culminate in a minimum of at least three weeks of full-time teaching.
- Assign the student teacher to duties beyond the classroom to aid in the awareness of the total school program.

Responsibilities to the University

- Be available for discussions during the university supervisor's announced visits
- Warn the student teacher of unprofessional behaviors before they become habitual
- Contact the university supervisor immediately if the student teacher has displayed behaviors or habits of concern. See the handbook section on "Dealing with Concerns" for more information.

Orienting Your Student Teacher

In orienting the student teacher, the following are recommended as a guide to prepare for the student teacher's entrance into your classroom:

- Inform your classroom students, as well as parents and other faculty and staff members, of the arrival of your student teacher.
- Familiarize yourself with The University of Scranton's student teaching program by attending an orientation session on campus and reviewing the Handbook.

- Make copies of the class roster, daily schedule, and school policies and rules for your student teacher.
- Provide your student teacher with a desk or table to serve as a work space.
- Acquaint your student teacher with important individuals within your school, as well as the site and its facilities.
- Introduce the student teacher to your classes as a member of the teaching team.