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SPECIAL EDUCATION

Cooperating Teacher HANDBOOK

Department of Special Education
College of Education
St. Cloud State University

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/SPED/>

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Table of Contents

Department of Special Education.....	2
Program Description	2
Disability Policy.....	2
Special Education Portfolio.....	2
Absences	3
Progression of Teacher Candidates.....	3
Expectations for Cooperating Teachers	6
Expectations of University Supervisors	7
Withdrawing from Student Teaching.....	7
Procedures for Termination.....	8
Resources	9

Department of Special Education Mission and Vision

Program Description

Students in the special education program at the undergraduate or graduate level may obtain K-12 licensure in one or more of the following disability categories:

- Developmental Disabilities (DCD classrooms)
- Learning Disability (LD)
- Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)
- Physical Health Disability (P/HD) -- graduate students only

Prior to student teaching, students will have completed foundation courses in special education, individual differences, child development and special education teaching methodology. All required courses must be successfully completed prior to student teaching with the exception of the licensure-specific methods course.

Student Teaching

Undergraduate and graduate students without one year of contractual teaching experience must do their student teaching during the academic year. They may student teach fall or spring semester. They will be placed in two settings each for about eight weeks, to provide the breadth of experience needed for a K-12 teaching license.

Teacher candidates are expected to follow the guidelines and regulations of the host school district as well as those guidelines and regulations that have been established by the building principal and cooperating teacher. During the dates that a teacher candidate is assigned to a setting, she or he is expected to follow the same calendar as his or her cooperating teacher. In addition, the teacher candidate is expected to attend parent/teacher/student conferences, in-service sessions, and extra-curricular activities that the supervisory teacher attends.

Teacher candidates also attend mentor group meetings and take a methods course in their area of licensure. Teacher candidates should follow the university calendar regarding these classes.

For graduate students with at least one year of contractual teaching experience, student teaching may be completed during the summer. If the student is obtaining a LD license, she/he takes the methods course during the May intersession preceding student teaching. For licensure in DD, EBD, and PHD the methods course is taken during the academic year.

Disability Policy

If a student has a disability, he or she may require accommodations. In order to receive accommodations for courses, field experiences, and/or student teaching, students must be registered with Student Disability Services (320.308.4080). It is important to contact the Student Disability Services office to determine if different accommodations may be required for specific settings.

It is the student's responsibility to notify the course instructor and field experience/student teaching supervisor if accommodations are required. When accommodations are needed in public school settings, the student must notify the Director of the Office of Clinical Experiences (320.308.4783), who will share this information with the school principal.

Special Education Portfolio

The special education portfolio is intended to document the students' competence regarding the special education licensure standards as spelled out by the Minnesota Board of Teaching and the Council for Exceptional Children. Each student who participates in student teaching is expected to complete and submit a portfolio by the end of the student teaching experience.

In addition to competence, the portfolio format provides direction to teacher candidates throughout their student teaching experience. It serves as a resource for career initiation, self-reflection and future professional development.

There are two levels of documentation that teacher candidates may include in their portfolios. The capstone experience of student teaching is the source of evidence that is collected directly from actual practice. For example, students may include an Evaluation Report (confidential information redacted) that reflects their use of evaluation instruments. St. Cloud State places a higher priority on these portfolio artifacts and expects that they represent the majority of the student's final portfolio.

A second level of documentation comes from students' completion of projects within their courses. These projects are designated as portfolio assignments and may be included in the final portfolio as additional documentation. The weighting of these assignments will be less than those completed in student teaching.

SCSU Special Education Supervisors recommend teacher candidates begin their experience by familiarizing themselves with the portfolio contents. It works well if teacher candidates share these requirements with cooperating teachers in an attempt to determine which requirements can be fulfilled in each setting. Further clarification of the portfolio will occur throughout mentor group meetings. Portfolios are typically shared with the university supervisor at the end of the student teaching semester.

Absences

Absences are acceptable only under the following conditions. More than **three** such absences **in a semester** will cause your student teaching assignment to be extended to make up all the lost days. The student teaching experience can be canceled due to excessive tardiness or absences. All absences must be discussed with your university supervisor. Teacher candidates are not given "personal days", and are expected to adhere to the school calendar.

In case of illness or bereavement

Contact your **cooperating teacher** and **university supervisor** as soon as you know you will not be at school.

In case of emergency

Contact your **cooperating teacher, university supervisor** as soon as possible.

In case of poor weather conditions

Follow your **building's policies**; check for closing or late start announcement on the radio, television or internet.

Holidays

Follow the school's calendar, not St Cloud State University's

In-service

Attend all functions required for your cooperating teacher, including professional meetings

Attendance at the Professional Development Day conference at SCSU is required.

Your cooperating teacher and university supervisor should approve attendance at other conferences and meetings.

Progression of Teacher Candidates

Each teacher candidate's progress is individual, arising from the experience and confidence that he or she brings to the setting. For this reason, no specific timelines are assigned to these sequences. Each is described here to provide guidance for the cooperating teachers and the teacher candidates. The sequences include: 1) orientation, 2) observation, 3) participation, 4) conferencing, and 5) full teaching responsibility.

Orientation

A good orientation is a vital part of the learning and induction process for teacher candidates. While it is significant at the beginning of the teaching experience, the literature suggests that orientation is most effective as a continuous process.

General Orientation

During the orientation sequence, the cooperating teacher can assist with general orientation by:

- introducing the teacher candidate to faculty members, administrators, and other school personnel;
- helping the teacher candidate become acquainted with the facilities such as the nurse's office, student records, instructional supplies, audio-visual materials and general layout of the building;
- modeling professional behavior;
- providing an environment for learning;
- discussing teaching philosophy, methods, school policies, rules, and regulations;
- classroom and school-wide behavior management and crisis management procedures;
- providing information about the total school experiences that occurs throughout the academic year;
- suggesting and implementing techniques for becoming acquainted with students.

Orientation with Students

The cooperating teacher orients the students by:

- informing them before the teacher candidate arrives that there will be another teacher in the room;
- establishing the teacher candidate in the role of another teacher;
- introducing the teacher candidate to all classes.

Orientation to the Community

- sensitizing teacher candidates to the community in general and more specifically to its educational resources;
- familiarizing teacher candidates with community agencies serving people with various disabilities.

Observation (for teacher candidates)

Observation with a Purpose

During the first several days of the teaching assignment, most of the day will be spent observing the classroom, the cooperating teacher and other professionals. To make these observations meaningful, candidates may find the following guiding questions useful.

Role of the Teacher Candidate--Building/Site Protocol

1. Who is contacted when help is needed? How is the contact made?
2. What matters of concern are reported to the school principal?
3. How are the media and audio video resources obtained and used (computers, electronic IEPs, reports, confidential student records)
4. How and where are materials copied for classroom use?
5. How and when are daily/weekly announcements given?
6. What are the procedures for fire/tornado drills?
7. What are the procedures for crisis management?

Specific Classroom Customs/Procedures to be Observed

1. How are attendance and tardiness handled?
2. What are the procedures for greeting visitors to the classroom?
3. What are the procedures when students become ill?

4. What are the routine procedures and expectations for students sharpening pencils, leaving the room and talking to other classmates?
5. What are the behavior management systems that are being used for the class and for individual students?
6. What are the discipline strategies?
7. What are the standards for evaluating student behavior?
8. Are there any automatic privileges and penalties?
9. How are students reinforced for positive behavior and accomplishments?

Students--The Teaching Process

(Observe a specific lesson or series of lessons and respond to the following):

1. What are the objectives for this lesson?
2. What are the materials used to help accomplish these objectives?
3. What teaching methods are used? (direct instruction, motivation strategies)
4. What accommodations and modifications are being implemented, how and rationale?
5. How are unexpected events or behavior handled?
6. How does the teacher use eye contact, voice inflection, proximity, and other nonverbal prompts and cues?
7. What seems to be the most interesting class activity in this lesson?
8. What learning, academic, social, behavioral, etc. skills are being developed?
9. What elements or aspects of the lesson affect the child's attention to task, learning and behavior?
10. How does the classroom atmosphere have an impact on the learning process?

Participation

It is a good idea for the teacher candidate to assume some responsibilities immediately. These responsibilities will vary from school to school and with different grade levels, degree of individual student need, etc.

- Assisting with duties such as playground, lunchroom, and bus supervision
- Administering and interpreting tests
- Providing individual and small group instruction for pupils
- Participate in student program planning including attending IEP and other meetings
- Consulting with regular and special education teachers and support staff
- Sharing special talents and experiences

Because shared planning is considered to be such an important part of teaching candidate's practice, it should take place throughout the entire experience; however, it is most helpful during that time period when the teacher candidate is observing, participating, and beginning actual teaching. The cooperating teacher may share written as well as verbal plans with the teacher candidate. It can be helpful to discuss a daily plan with the candidate covering such things as goals, objectives, methods, materials and evaluation procedures.

Conferences between Cooperating Teachers and Teacher Candidates

Successful supervision requires that the persons involved (cooperating teacher, SCSU supervisor, and teacher candidate) discuss the experiences of the teacher candidate. These conferences may involve two individuals (e.g., cooperating teacher, teacher candidate) or they may involve several individuals (e.g., cooperating teacher, teacher candidate, SCSU supervisor). The following suggestions pertain to the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the teacher candidate. The cooperating teacher should:

- Acquaint the teacher candidate with the purpose of the conferences and his or her responsibility in the conference;
- Be prepared to analyze the teacher candidate's ideas, strategies, methods professionalism, etc., and offer praise, constructive feedback and suggestions for changes;
- Take advantage of "free" moments for frequent informal conferences to discuss daily needs and strengths;
- Try to gain insight into the teacher candidate's interests, background, ambitions, and professional attitude;
- Be willing to learn through the experience as a supervisor. Listen and accept reasonable proposals for conducting the class, particular lessons and behavior management.

Effective conferences can be facilitated by assuring that:

- Each person understands the purpose of the conference;
- The setting is free from tension;
- Each individual feels free to play an active role to contribute, suggest, and listen;
- Each individual is respected for his or her contributions;
- The conference is used for constructive planning.

Full Teaching Responsibility

A teacher candidate is expected to assume responsibility for teaching as soon as the cooperating teacher believes that s/he is ready. It is desirable that this be a cooperative decision between the teacher candidate and the cooperating teacher. Teacher candidates are expected to assume greater responsibility for teaching over the course of their placement and demonstrate the ability to assume total responsibility as a beginning teacher. The amount of time spent independently teaching will vary from situation to situation. **However, there must be a licensed teacher with the student teacher at all times that students are present.**

Expectations of Cooperating Teachers

Please contact the university supervisor immediately if you have concerns regarding the student teacher.

The cooperating teacher plays a major role in the education of the teacher candidate. Because of the significance attached to this supervisory role, it is necessary that the cooperating teacher be thoroughly familiar with a number of guidelines. The policies and procedures described in this handbook should provide assistance in this role. In addition, we invite your suggestions and comments for future revisions of this document. The teacher candidate's background including a current resume and autobiography will be given to each cooperating teacher.

Cooperating teachers may earn continuing education units (CEU's) that are applied toward licensure renewal for supervising student teachers. Information can be accessed by going to the Office of Clinical Experiences webpage, then the cooperating teacher link at <http://www.stcloudstate.edu/oce/partners/default.asp>

Throughout the teaching experience, the cooperating teacher and teacher candidate will function as a teaching team. This will include cooperative planning, teaching, and evaluating. During the early part of the experience, the major responsibility for planning, teaching, and evaluating students is typically maintained by the cooperating teacher while the teacher candidate thoughtfully observes.

Note: Even if student teachers are Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) trained, they should not be using physical restraints with children (OCE, 2008).

The cooperating teacher is responsible for providing supervision and completing formal written observations on a teacher candidate as well as completing a final evaluation of each teacher candidate.

Meet at least once a week with the teacher candidate.

The following sections will describe the teacher candidate's progression, supervision, and evaluation.

Supervision

The quality of the daily supervision is essential to a high quality student teaching performance. No other single factor is as important in the development of the total potential of a beginning teacher.

In their daily work with teacher candidates, cooperating teachers should:

- meet at least once per week;
- do 3 formal observations with written or verbal feedback;
- help teacher candidates relate teaching theory to actual teaching in the classroom. Discuss with them the reasons for selection of methods and materials to be used;

- try to assure understanding and application of the basic principles of learning;
- monitor the development of teacher candidate's lesson plans; discuss the plans, and offer suggestions prior to the teaching of the lesson; help teacher candidates evaluate lessons after they are taught; encourage independent thinking in planning, use of materials, motivation, and teaching approaches;
- final evaluation and/or letter of recommendation. Send these to EB A-211;
- withhold criticisms during a lesson except in rare cases;
- help develop consistent classroom control, which is conducive to learning. This should include promoting self-control, positive behavior management strategies and respect for others;
- help promote a natural, working atmosphere in the classroom in which the teacher is poised and confident and the pupils are self-directed and free from tensions;
- help teacher candidates meet the needs of the individual students;
- emphasize the development of such attitudes as concern for others, willingness to do the best quality of work possible, willingness to help others, honesty and fair play, and appreciation for cultural, linguistic, and intellectual values;
- assist teacher candidates in becoming familiar with various sets of cultural values that exist within the community and school. Also familiarize them with resources that exist to enhance learning especially for those students whose cultural experiences differ from those of the student teacher;
- assist teacher candidates in realizing the need for continuous evaluation of their teaching techniques. This should affect their planning and improve the quality of classroom instruction.

Expectations of University Supervisors

Supervisor responsibilities include:

- The university supervisor will assess various special education settings in order to determine the best placements for meet the needs of the teacher candidate.
- The university supervisor informs the cooperating teacher of any university expectations.
- The university supervisor confers with the cooperating teacher about the teacher candidate.
- The university supervisor visits the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher a minimum of three times per placement.
- The university supervisor conducts and writes 2-3 formal observations, reporting on strengths and areas of improvement for the teacher candidate.
- The university supervisor provides constructive feedback to the teacher candidate.
- The university supervisor submits grades.
- The university supervisor meets with teacher candidates an average of one hour per week in mentor group.
- The university supervisor reads and responds to the teacher candidate's journal.

The university supervisor is available to assist individual teacher candidates with personal and professional problems as they relate to their student teaching.

The university supervisor provides necessary orientation for teacher candidates concerning their responsibilities.

The university supervisor informs the teacher candidate whether his/her progress and performance is satisfactory/unsatisfactory following each observation.

The university supervisor informs the teacher candidate of professional concerns and/or performance concerns arising anytime during the semester.

The university supervisor will be responsible for enacting termination procedures if necessary.

Withdrawing from Student Teaching

A teacher candidate who voluntarily withdraws from student teaching must contact the Office of Clinical Experiences, the university supervisor, cooperating teacher and any other university personnel whom s/he deems necessary. It is the responsibility of the teacher candidate to withdraw from the courses in accordance with university policies. It is also the responsibility of the candidate to determine whether university policy provides a partial or full refund of tuition and fees. If appropriate, the teacher candidate also needs to contact the Financial Aids office to notify them of the withdrawal.

In the case of a voluntary withdrawal on the part of the teacher candidate, the university supervisor will write a report describing, in detail, the circumstances of the withdrawal. It will be placed in the teacher candidate's student teaching file. The file will be held in the Special Education office for ten years.

Even if the last day to withdraw has passed, the teacher candidate, with the approval of the university supervisor may receive credit for the time that was spent in the schools. The university supervisor will determine whether the student teaching credits can be converted to SPED 499 credits (for undergraduates) or SPED 600, (for graduate students) credits. However, if the teacher candidate wants to withdraw because it is not likely s/he will successfully complete the student teaching experience, the university supervisor may assign a grade of u (unsatisfactory) or give the teacher candidate an incomplete. In situations such as this, the student teaching credits cannot be converted to SPED 499 or SPED 600 credits.

Procedures for Termination

Unsatisfactory performance during student teaching may include problems in any of the following categories:

1. Deficiencies in teaching skills.
2. Deficiencies in knowledge of academic subject matter.
3. Deficiencies in interpersonal relationships.
4. Personal problems that hinder professional accomplishment.
5. Chronic tardiness and/or absences.

Existence of the problem and its degree of severity will be determined by the university supervisor and cooperating teacher. The university supervisor can bring in other university faculty to observe the teacher candidate and/or consult with the university supervisor regarding the teacher candidate.

After the conference, the university supervisor will write an Action Plan or contract. It will include a description of the concerns, the steps to be taken to remediate the situation, and a timeline for the completion of the steps and resources needed. This contract will be given to the teacher candidate, along with an explanation of its contents. The teacher candidate must sign the Action Plan. If the teacher candidate refuses to sign the Plan s/he will not be allowed to student teach.

After the university supervisor and cooperating teacher have determine the scope and severity of the problem, the university supervisor will advise the student about the nature of the problem and the process to be followed to remedy the situation. Next, the university supervisor will set up a conference with the teacher candidate, university supervisor, and the cooperating teacher unless the cooperating teacher requests not to be present. Other appropriate school personnel may be a part of the conference.

At this conference the problem will be described, as well as the steps and timeline the student should follow to remediate the situation. Also, the decision to terminate or continue the teacher candidate's student teaching should be conveyed to all at the conference by the university supervisor.

The teacher candidate may be removed from the student teaching site immediately if the school so desires. When schools ask to have a student teacher removed from the building, the decision is not appealable. When there are severe skills deficits and professional concerns, the student teacher may be terminated from student teaching permanently. This will be determined based on a vote of the Special Education Department Committee of the Whole.

If the teacher candidate is removed from the site, but still has materials that belong to the school, s/he will bring these materials to the university supervisor, who will then deliver them to the school. The teacher candidate must not return to the student teaching site or contact the cooperating teacher in any manner.

The university supervisor will contact the Office of Clinical Experiences as soon as the decision to terminate student teaching has been made.

The amount of academic credit the teacher candidate will be granted is discussed. A passing or incomplete grade will not be given for student teaching courses in situations where the student teaching experience has been terminated. If approved by the university supervisor, the student teaching credits can be dropped and replaced by SPED 499 credits that can be used toward graduation.

Requests to reenter student teaching must be initiated with the teacher candidate sending a letter to a committee comprised of at least four Special Education student teaching supervisors. The letter must include evidence that the problem that led to the termination has been remedied, and the steps in the Action Plan or contract have been completed. Reentry cannot take place sooner than one year after the date of termination, nor until all the steps of the Action Plan have been successfully completed.

When, and if, the teacher candidate reenters student teaching, s/he will be under an Action Plan or contract. The teacher candidate may be expected to successfully complete the entire student teaching semester to be eligible for licensure.

Resources

Resource	Web Address
Special Education Department	http:// www.stcloudstate.edu/SPED/
Minnesota Personnel Licensing	http://education.state.mn.us/html/intro_licensure.htm
SCSU Teacher Licensing Information	http://www.stcloudstate.edu/registrar/
Office of Clinical Experiences	www.stcloudstate.edu/occe/

