

Field Experience Handbook



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Mission Statement of the Teacher Education Program

Our mission is to facilitate student-centered education designed to prepare life-long reflective teachers who build positive learning environments for all learners based on current best practices. To promote the application of theory to practice, we integrate a standards-based, interdisciplinary curriculum with extensive field experiences in culturally diverse settings.

Student-centered education

Instructional practices that facilitate each learner's active construction of new knowledge, allow students' ownership of their own progress, and take into consideration the individual needs of each learner.

Life-long reflective teachers

Teachers who throughout their careers continually analyze and seek to improve the methods, materials, and consequences of their classroom practices in order to enhance their students' learning.

Current best practices

Those instructional and interpersonal strategies grounded in research and presently recognized by the field as most effective in promoting student achievement and well-being, including but not limited to constructivist pedagogy, higher order thinking skills, inclusive instruction, interdisciplinary curriculum and traditional and alternative assessment.

Standards-based curriculum

Course content, learning activities, and assessment procedures correlated to national teacher education standards (NCATE and ISTE) and state teacher education standards (Chapter 49 and 354) in content and pedagogy. Teaching methods course content focused on standards-based lesson and unit plan development addressing national and state academic standards.

Interdisciplinary curriculum

A knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies content methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic or experience.

Extensive field experiences

Elementary:

- a. During each of their four semesters, students gain practical experiences by observing and teaching in local school districts.
- b. First semester juniors observe elementary classrooms on three or more Fridays during the semester.
- c. Second semester juniors complete approximately 175 hours in a suburban setting, and first semester seniors complete approximately 140 hours in an urban setting.
- d. Students are assigned "field tasks" for each course to assure the integration of theory and practice.

All experiences are prior to the formal twelve weeks of student teaching.

Vision Statement of the Teacher Education Program

The Teacher Education Program at Penn State Harrisburg is dedicated to providing interdisciplinary instruction and experiences which

promote a democratic view of the schools and society,

Democratic educators understand how social institutions impact learning and teaching and ensure that all children have equal opportunity for a quality education. They also know that within democratic education, the whole experience defines the learning process which is always evolving.

foster critical, creative, and reflective thinking,

Teachers of the future need to engage in effective critical, creative, and reflective thinking, as well as be able to foster the same skills in their students. Critical thinking refers to the rigorous evaluation of the value or accuracy of information, assertion, and sources of data. Creative thinking refers to developing an original product or process that fulfills a specific need. Reflective thinking involves being aware of one's own thinking concerning professional issues and practice. Each type of thinking requires dispositions and attitudes conducive to its development. Taken together, critical, creative, and reflective thinking lead to improved decision making, problem solving, teaching, and learning.

enhance the understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures,

Teachers need to comprehend, analyze, respect, and value similarities and differences in languages, customs, rituals, kinship systems, belief systems, histories, and economies. Through example and pedagogy, teachers also need to pass on their knowledge and convictions to their students.

nurture sensitive and caring attitudes,

Effective teachers are empathetic, understand individual students in terms of their uniqueness, and interact appropriately with students to enhance their personal responsibility and self-esteem.

extend content knowledge and pedagogical competencies, and

Teachers continually expand their content knowledge and pedagogy and translate these into practice. They develop the ability to plan, implement and assess effective curriculum and instruction using technology as well as a variety of appropriate learning tools based upon the needs of learners.

instill a commitment to scholarship and professionalism.

Graduates of education programs at PSH will be committed to scholarship and professionalism by continued growth through membership and participation in professional communities. They will engage in life-long learning, inquiry, action research, and intellectual discourse. They will adhere to an advocacy of established ethical standards, and they will demonstrate a dedication to excellence and pride in the profession.

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Section 1: Information for All Field Experience Team Members

Introduction

Training tomorrow's teachers requires a team effort. At Penn State Harrisburg, early field experience is an integral part of that training. Team participants include local school district partners, college faculty and supervisors, and second and third semester student interns.

The intent of this handbook is to provide general guidelines and expectations that apply to all team members as well as semester-specific information. Most information that the team will require during the internship is included somewhere in this handbook.

General Guidelines and Expectations for Interns

The purpose of both the suburban and urban field experience is to (1) provide the intern with authentic teaching and learning experiences in a variety of classrooms and (2) give the intern opportunities to apply college course methodology within the context of elementary classrooms.

As a guest in the school, the intern must be professional in appearance and demeanor. Following is a list of expectations that more clearly defines professionalism:

- ***Look professional.*** Be sure that your hairstyle, jewelry, and wardrobe choices are consistent with teachers' in the school. Jeans, tight/short skirts, and tight/low-cut sweaters are examples of attire that is inappropriate.
- ***Be professional.*** Show respect toward students, parents, all school personnel, and school property. Chewing gum or carrying water bottles or coffee mugs throughout the school is unprofessional. School districts have a "smoke-free" policy that applies to both buildings and grounds. Finally, field experience is the real world. You may see and hear things that are different from what you expected. Listen and observe, and keep unfavorable judgments to yourself.
- ***Be on time.*** Punctuality is not optional. Organize yourself so that you will arrive at school several minutes before you are scheduled to report. You will notice that most teachers report for work early, too.
- ***Avoid absences.*** The only valid reasons for absence from field experience are serious personal illness or a death in the immediate family. If one of these occurs, notify both your mentor teacher and your university supervisor immediately. Missed days will be required to be made up. Failure to make up missed days will result in a reduction in grade.
- ***Be prepared.*** Develop lesson plans well ahead of time so that your mentor and supervisor have an opportunity to review them and give you feedback prior to implementation. Be sure that all tasks assigned to you by your mentor are accomplished in a timely manner.

- ***Demonstrate initiative.*** Be continually on the look out for opportunities to help students and to support your mentor teacher by offering assistance.
- ***Reflect on each new experience.*** Throughout your educational experience, reflection becomes a key to personal and professional growth.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Intern

Prior to the start of field experience, the intern should purchase liability insurance from either PSBA or KEYTA. Information on liability insurance will be shared at the field experience orientation session held on campus. In addition to securing liability insurance, be sure to locate your Act 34 and Act 151 clearances and your TB inoculation results, all three of which you should take with you to the school orientation. The school may make copies for their records and will return the originals to you.

During the time frame between the campus orientation and the school orientation, the intern should read this handbook thoroughly and mentally prepare for the full-day school orientation conducted by the principal. As the intern attends classes, he/she will receive additional information from instructors concerning field tasks that must be completed during field experience.

Once field experience begins, the intern must organize him/herself so that both course requirements and field requirements receive the attention warranted. Lesson plans that the intern develops for teaching in the field should be reviewed first by the mentor teacher, and then by the supervisor. This two-tiered review process necessitates writing lesson plans well in advance of their implementation.

The intern is expected to teach during both rotations even if all required field tasks are completed during the first rotation. Since preparing a presentation portfolio is a requirement of all fourth semester students, it is important to save artifacts from field experience. Examples of artifacts include but are not limited to: lesson plans, unit plans, bulletin boards, discipline plans, anecdotal records that show student growth, and other evidence that demonstrates your progress as a pre-service teacher.

By the last day of field experience, the intern is expected to give the university supervisor a copy of his/her Statement of Impact on Student Learning. A copy should also be placed in the ANGEL Drop Box for either EDUC 495A (sixth semester) or EDUC 495B (seventh semester). This paper counts for a significant portion of the grade for the course.

Field experience is designed to be an authentic learning opportunity for the intern. Therefore, it is important that the intern be open to suggestions given by the mentor and the supervisor. Teaching is a complex craft that requires practice over time. Field experience is a unique opportunity to practice that craft while receiving constructive feedback from two professionals: the mentor and the supervisor.

Prior to leaving each rotation, the intern should express his/her appreciation for the opportunity to work in the mentor's classroom both verbally and in a written thank you note. Additionally, the intern should thank the building principal for the privilege of serving as an intern in the principal's school.

The Mentor

Teachers who willingly and enthusiastically accept a partnership role in providing an early field experience to second semester and third semester Penn State Harrisburg students serve an invaluable role in preparing pre-service teachers for the classroom.

Because interns are not student teachers, they often require more information about school and classroom procedures than student teachers do, at least at first. Interns will also benefit from your suggestions on what they could do better. Do not hesitate to give your intern constructive feedback both verbally, and in written form.

Interns are required to contact their mentor teachers should they necessarily be absent. Be sure that your intern knows how to get in touch with you should the need arise. Missed days must be made up at a time that will be acceptable to you. Additionally, your contacting your intern in a weather-related delay or cancellation would be greatly appreciated.

Major responsibilities of the mentor include:

- *Involving the intern in interactions with students most of the time he/she is in your classroom.* Activities such as tutoring individual students, working with small groups of students, teaching whole group lessons, administering tests, monitoring recess, and taking students to specials are all appropriate. Giving your intern a taste of those non-instructional responsibilities that are a part of teaching is certainly appropriate, too, as long as most of the intern's time is spent on instruction-related interactions with students.
- *Checking the intern's lesson plans for content.* It is the supervisor's responsibility to work with the intern on lesson plan format, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. If you are not comfortable or satisfied with what the intern has planned, give him/her suggestions with the expectation that the plan be resubmitted to you the following day. The lesson plan format that Penn State interns are required to follow is included in the appendices of this handbook.
- *Maintaining a record of attendance.* Daily attendance and punctuality are basic to the success of anyone aspiring to be a professional teacher. To assist the supervisor in evaluating whether your intern is reliable, we ask that you keep a log of your intern's attendance as well as his/her arrival and departure times. A copy of the log is included in your packet and appears in the appendix of this handbook.

- *Evaluating and grading the intern.* Of most value to the intern are suggestions for improvement that the mentor can offer throughout the intern's tenure in your classroom. The intern will also benefit from specific information on what he/she is doing well. A copy of the evaluation form for interns is included in the appendices of this handbook. The supervisor will give you an evaluation to complete on your intern prior to the end of his/her experience in your classroom. If at all possible, try to go over your final evaluation of your intern's performance with him/her.

The Supervisor

The Penn State Harrisburg faculty member or professional who is hired by the School of Behavioral Sciences and Education of Penn State serves as the liaison between the host school and the university and facilitates the work of the intern and the mentor.

Major responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- Attending the campus orientation session.
- Discussing internship requirements with the intern and mentor early in the first week of each rotation.
- Making contact with the intern and mentor every week to either observe, coach, or conference. To improve communication, supervisors are encouraged to maintain e-mail contact with mentors and interns as needed.
- Making certain the mentor received all the materials in the packet including field tasks, intern's bibliographic data sheet, and evaluation forms.
- Reviewing and critiquing the intern's lesson plans for organization and format, grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling. This review should follow the mentor's critiquing of the plans for content.
- Spending extra time with interns having difficulty.
- Regularly checking in with the building principal to be sure that everything is going smoothly from the principal's perspective.
- Evaluating the intern on a formative basis throughout the internship. Formative evaluation should include, but not be limited to, two formal observations. A formal observation requires the observation of an entire lesson, writing an observation report on the lesson, and conferencing with the intern about the lesson.
- Conferencing with the intern immediately following each informal and formal observation and providing written comments as soon as possible.
- Evaluating the intern at the end of the field experience, using the evaluation form included in the appendix of this handbook.

