

Early Field Experience Handbook

Teacher Education in the Sciences and Humanities
(TESH)

Department of Teaching and Learning
College of Human Resources and Education

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www.tandl.vt.edu/TESH/index.html

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Introduction

The early field experience program for English, mathematics, science, and social studies was initiated in the fall quarter of 1975. In 1979, music and foreign language were added to the list of participating programs. The following considerations support the program:

1. The early field experience provides planned and meaningful activities related to the instructional process.
2. Provision of early field experience is in agreement with guidelines for teacher preparation established by various national organizations.
3. Use of courses integrating field experience and theory is known to be a successful educational technique.
4. Courses that teach methods concurrent with field experience should provide for effective early teacher education.

Program Description

The early field experience is designed to provide candidates in teacher preparation programs with experience working with teachers and children in schools. Generally, candidates may participate in the field experience during the fall semester of their senior year or as graduate students; however, candidates should consult program advisors in their teaching field for specific information. All program participants have introductory discussion sessions explicitly covering the responsibilities, duties and regulations of field experience program at the outset of the fall semester. This handbook can be found on the Teacher Education in the Sciences and Humanities homepage. (www.tandl.vt.edu/TESH/index.html)

Candidates serve as interns in the schools for a minimum of two half-days per week in the undergraduate course or two full days per week (150 total hours) for the graduate field experience course in a local school. Their hours coordinate with the schedules of their respective schools. Thus, if school starts at 8:00 a.m. and the intern is assigned to the "morning half day," the will report at 8:00 a.m. or at the time designated for teachers' arrival. Students enrolled in graduate field experience courses will remain in school until 3:30 p.m. or until the end of the teachers' school day. Exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the program advisor and cooperating teacher.

Interns are placed in schools by the faculty members directing each subject area program and in cooperation with the school divisions. Interns, whenever possible, are placed within a 45-mile radius of Blacksburg. Although interns are expected to provide

their own means of transportation, the program area will assist interns without vehicles in organizing car pools. In addition most school divisions require interns to provide evidence of a recent tuberculin test.

The field experience serves as a lab for the first content-specific methods course. This approach provides interns the opportunity to relate field experience with classroom theory. The content, activities, and assignments in the methods course coordinate with the field experience.

Objectives of the Field Experience Program

1. To provide interns exposure to students, classroom structure, teaching methods and techniques.
2. To provide interns the opportunity to share in selected teaching duties and to discover the various roles and tools of the classroom teacher.
3. To provide an opportunity for interns to integrate the methods course with their field experience.
4. To provide extended periods for interns to observe adolescent behavior for applications and interpretations in subsequent psychology and exceptional learner courses.
5. To provide the intern an opportunity to develop his/her philosophy of education.
6. To provide interns an opportunity for assessing their interest and potential as secondary school teachers.
7. To assist the Virginia Tech education faculty in decisions concerning recommendations of qualified interns as future student teaching candidates.

Role of the Intern

The field experience exposes the intern to teachers, administrators and pupils in a school setting. Interns have opportunities to observe various pedagogical techniques and a variety of other routine school procedures. One program goal is that interns achieve continual growth in their abilities to observe and evaluate interactions among school personnel and students.

As an initial field experience, the intern program is distinct from student teaching. Interns enter the program before completing formal course work in education and, in most cases, no teaching experience. They are not expected to emerge as proficient teachers. Rather, the field experience is designed to orient the intern to the teaching profession and to assist the intern in assessing his/her strengths and weaknesses as a potential teacher.

Interns may work with one teacher or several, depending on arrangements within their respective schools. The main role of the intern is to support and assist the cooperating teacher(s). Although interns attend primarily to instructional support tasks, they are encouraged to participate in as many activities as possible. An initial activity should be familiarization with school policies and procedures.

While working as a classroom intern, students must exhibit a sense of responsibility and professionalism. Contacts are not to be established with school division students outside of school activities. In professional classes or electronic portfolio documents, interns will not relate observed or alleged classroom incidents with teachers or students in any manner that could result in the identification of specific individuals or schools. The university staff will make every possible effort to establish and maintain the highest possible level of professional behavior by interns. Interns should at all times remember that they serve as a vital link in campus-community relations.

Interns will not report to assigned schools prior to or later than the announced orientation or starting date. Each intern will report to the assigned school every assigned day of the semester in which he/she is serving as an intern. It is essential that interns

understand the seriousness of unexcused absences. Interns observe local school schedules, not the schedule of Virginia Tech. If an intern cannot appear for work, the following explains his/her responsibilities:

1. Call the assigned school prior to the time you are expected to arrive. Identify yourself and your cooperating teacher and ask that the cooperating teacher be notified, and
2. Call your university mentor (also prior to the time you are expected).

In cases where absence is due to unavoidable circumstances, e.g., illness, death in the family, the intern is expected to arrange an alternate day for serving in the school. Both the cooperating teacher and university mentor are to be contacted concerning arrangements for an alternate day. Absences that are not excused by the university mentor cannot be made up. A written record of absences and the reasons for them will be kept by the cooperating teacher and university mentor.

Throughout the school-site portion of the intern program, students must maintain a log of their experiences. (The process and/or formats for these logs may vary in different methods classes.) The logs include a discussion of activities in which they participate, classroom observations, and their reflections on these observations. Log entries will not include names of any student or teacher (aliases or pseudonyms should be created). They will be turned in as specified by the appropriate course instructor. The main purpose of the logs is to provide the university staff with information concerning the diversity of field experiences as well as to give interns an opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

Intern Activities

Some of the activities considered appropriate for intern participation are listed below. Others may be added with the mutual consent of university and school division personnel. Schools may place limitations on any specific listed activity, although a variety of activities is recommended. Some course instructors have interns keep an activities checksheet to help monitor their work as well as make students accountable for their progress.

1. *Observation Activities*
 - attending a faculty meeting
 - observing cooperating teacher's class
 - visiting other grade levels or subject areas in the same school
 - using various observation schemes to focus on specific developmental concerns of adolescents
2. *Planning Activities*
 - conducting library research for teacher
 - assisting teacher in developing and organizing classroom material
 - assisting in writing assignments
 - obtaining special materials for class project
3. *Teaching Activities*
 - leading a discussion and/or read aloud sessions
 - making a short lesson presentation with supervision and cooperation of teacher to an individual, small group, or perhaps the entire class
 - assisting the teacher in a skills lesson
4. *Supervisory Activities*
 - assisting pupils with remedial work
 - assisting a small group with an assignment

- administering tests
- supervising with the teacher in room, cafeteria, gym, library, etc.
- assisting students with difficult information and pertinent information on missed assignments and make-up work
- providing individual attention to students who are experiencing difficulty in mastering specific learning concepts
- assisting with laboratory activities

5. *Clerical Activities*

- grading tests, papers, workbooks
- typing materials for the teacher
- operating copying/duplicating equipment
- preparing file folders
- preparing bulletin boards
- maintaining attendance records
- preparing, distributing and maintaining classroom materials and equipment
- preparing audio-visual aids for classroom use
- writing on the board
- assisting teacher in classifying and organizing books and materials
- setting up audio-visual equipment

Role of the Cooperating Teacher

Cooperating teachers are selected by local school divisions on the basis of their professional competency and interest in having an intern. Only teachers who have taught for at least one year in the division serve as cooperating teachers for the field experience program. Through their guidance, interns are exposed to a variety of teaching activities and daily routines in order to provide an introduction to the teaching profession.

A cooperative working relationship between interns and cooperating teachers is vital to the success of the program. Discussions and conferences should be scheduled frequently to (1) plan for future intern activities, (2) assess the professional growth of the intern in the field experience, and (3) identify and resolve problems.

There are many aspects to the role of cooperating teacher. Some are listed below:

- familiarizing the intern with school policies and procedures
- helping the intern develop a realistic view of adolescents
- sharing information that might assist in helping students
- exposing the intern to a wide range of school experiences
- assisting the intern in evaluating his/her strengths and weaknesses as a potential teacher

Thus, cooperating teachers provide support and the setting for the interns' initial exposure to the teaching profession.

Cooperating teachers and university mentors jointly and cooperatively evaluate the interns. A more complete description of the evaluation procedure is presented in another section of this handbook.

Role of the University Mentor

University mentors act as liaisons between school divisions and the university. Clarification of program procedures, expectations, and goals is provided by university mentors. They are responsible for assuring that cooperating teachers, school administrators, and interns all have a clear understanding of the program. Doing so includes but is not limited to distributing field experience handbooks to all program participants at the onset of the fall semester.

Mentors also evaluate the interns' performance in the schools. Since the program attempts to maximize the diversity of intern activity, the mentor will monitor the range of activities that the intern experiences. In instances where the intern is participating in only one type of activity, e.g., only clerical work, for a prolonged period of time, the university mentor will arrange a conference with the cooperating teacher and the intern. The purpose of such a conference is to suggest other possible activities for the intern. The weekly Intern Log, as well as the activities checklists required by some methods instructors, should assist the cooperating teacher, the university mentor, and the intern in assuring exposure to a wide range of activities.

University mentors are responsible for the supervision of interns and should work closely with cooperating teachers and principals to establish and maintain clear lines of communication. Anticipation and identification of problems is an ongoing process. Program problems should be discussed with all involved parties.

Appropriate and timely counseling will enhance the success of the intern and prevent problems. Conduct, cooperation, progress, and other pertinent aspects of the performance of the intern should be discussed frequently in sessions attended by the university mentor, cooperating teacher and intern. An appropriate means for the intern to address grievances should be agreed to by all persons concerned.

Interns are evaluated jointly by the university mentor and cooperating teacher. The mentor is ultimately responsible to the university for the supervision and evaluation of interns.

Evaluation Procedures

Interns are evaluated on an A-F basis (undergraduate course) or Pass-Fail (graduate field experience course). Since interns participate in a variety of activities, depending upon their situation, evaluation is based on a set of general criteria rather than on a set of prescribed activities. Evaluation serves two functions: 1) to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the intern as a potential teacher based upon observations of the field experience and (2) to recommend/not recommend the intern as a student teaching candidate.

The evaluation process is conducted throughout the early field experience. Frequent conferences will be held between the intern, cooperating teacher and the university mentor. These conferences are for the purpose of identifying and/or remediating problems.

A copy of the evaluation form used for the final evaluation is included in this handbook. These evaluations are jointly and cooperatively completed by the cooperating teacher and the university mentor. Interns also evaluate their own progress at these times.

The criteria for evaluating interns includes their ability to work willingly and cooperatively, assume responsibility, relate to students appropriately, handle materials responsibly, follow procedures and routines, demonstrate professional behavior, and present instruction. In order to facilitate evaluation based upon these criteria, it is suggested that mentors and cooperating teachers maintain records of intern activities, absences, tardiness and conferences. Furthermore, two unexcused absences is cause for failure of the field experience.

Final evaluations are conducted the last week of the intern program. A conference is held, attended if possible by the intern, cooperating teacher and university mentor. Evaluations are to be shared and discussed at this time. Ultimately the university mentor is responsible to the university for the evaluation of interns. Therefore, any evaluation discrepancies are resolved by the university mentor.

Since one purpose of the field experience is the selection of student teaching candidates, cooperating teachers and university mentors will determine whether to recommend the intern for student teaching. Recommendations are based upon observations of the intern in the early field experience program, including the course component.

Regular Status Admission to Professional Studies

Successful completion of the field experience is required to enter the student teaching internship. The decision not to admit an intern to student teaching is made by a

committee comprised of the TESH program area leader, the faculty member in charge of the licensure program, the Director of Teacher Education, and the Department Head of Teaching and Learning.

Teacher Education Licensure: A Preview

The Teacher Education in the Sciences and Humanities Program Area offers licensure programs in secondary English, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Music, Science, and Social Studies. For specific admission information to Professional Licensure Programs, students should consult the program advisor in each area and/or the Teacher Certification homepage. (<http://teachered.tandl.vt.edu/>)

The Teaching Major

The term "teaching major" refers to all course work taken to the date of review in those disciplines included within the subject or subjects for which the student is intending to seek licensure. Specific information for each program is available from the program advisors.

Time Schedule for Teacher Education

1. *Provisional Admission to Professional Studies*
After initial application and screening
2. *Continuation in Professional Studies*
Reviewed each semester
3. *Admission to Student Teaching*
Upon satisfactory completion of an early field experience and methods class, a positive recommendation from cooperating teacher and the University mentor, and submission of passing Praxis I scores
4. *Licensure Recommendation*
In order to receive a recommendation from the College of Human Resources and Education for Virginia Teacher Licensure, a student should
 - a. successfully complete the College's approved program
 - b. achieve at least a C (undergraduate program) or P (graduate program) in student teaching
 - c. achieve a GPA of at least 2.5 in the teaching major (undergraduate program; may be waived by the faculty member who directs the program) or 3.0 overall if in a graduate program
 - d. receive positive recommendation from both the cooperating teacher(s) and the University mentor(s)
 - e. submit passing Praxis II score if one is required by Virginia Department of Education (otherwise VDOE will issue a provisional license)

Failure to Meet Minimum Standards

Candidates who fail to meet the minimum standards described above may, at the discretion of the faculty member in charge of the program, be permitted to enter or to continue in that program in a probationary status.

Candidates wishing to appeal a decision by the faculty member in charge of the program may do so by submitting a statement of the nature of the appeal and the justifications for it to a committee comprised of the TESH program area leader, the faculty member in charge of the licensure program, the Director of Teacher Education, and the Department Head of Teaching and Learning.

Procedures for Application and Assignment

As noted previously, the student teaching placements are limited and must be carefully allocated to the prospective student teachers. The allotted student teacher placements are assigned by the students' program advisor in cooperation with the local schools. The prospective student teaching candidates make formal application on a Student Teaching Application Form through their Education advisors. Candidates must satisfy all department, program area, and College prerequisites before they will be considered for student teaching. Further, candidates who are suspended from the University for disciplinary reasons or who are either under indictment or have been convicted of a felony will not be considered for the early field experience or student teaching.

Limitations on Student Teacher Activities

Student teachers are encouraged to participate in all activities of the school to which they have been assigned for their clinical experience. However, since student teaching does require a heavy commitment, student teachers are discouraged from engaging in outside employment or participating in University extra-curricular activities. Candidates are also not permitted to enroll in more than 12 semester hours (graduate) or 16 semester hours (undergraduate) without the recommendation of the program advisor.

Student Teaching Internship Handbook

More specific information about the student teaching internship is available in the "Student Teaching Internship Handbook," available on the Teacher Education in the Sciences and Humanities homepage. (www.tandl.vt.edu/TESH/index.html)

**Teacher Education in the Sciences and Humanities
Virginia Tech
Early Field Experience**

Intern Evaluation

Intern _____ Semester _____ Year _____

Cooperating Teacher _____ School _____

Subject(s) and Grades Taught _____

Cooperating Principal _____ University Mentor _____

Report completed by (x):

Cooperating Teacher _____
University Mentor _____
Intern _____

Please complete the following evaluation for the areas you have observed. Write NA if you have not yet had the opportunity to observe the particular area indicated.

Evaluation Scale:

3 – *Distinguished*: Consistently observed; exceeds expectations for a beginning teacher.

2 - *Proficient*: Frequently observed; meets expectations for a beginning teacher.

1- *Basic*: Occasionally observed; minimally meets expectations for a beginning teacher

0 – *Unsatisfactory*: Not observed: does not meet expectations for a beginning teacher.

_____ Has demonstrated a working knowledge of the subject being taught.

_____ Has demonstrated a working knowledge of teaching strategies when asked to perform selected teaching activities.

_____ Has demonstrated communication skills, e.g. writing, speaking, and listening, appropriate for classroom instruction.

_____ Has been cooperative in carrying out selected tasks for the teacher.

_____ Has shown enthusiasm for teaching and also for the subject matter being taught.

_____ Has been willing to assist those students who have needed extra help.

_____ Has been at school, on time, each assigned day or notified the teacher of an excused absence in advance.

_____ Has dressed appropriately and adhered to school rules and policies.

_____ Has shown initiative by identifying tasks that needed to be done and by completing them.

_____ Has demonstrated professional behavior, including tact and self-control.

_____ Has been competent in maintaining control of the classroom when given the opportunity to perform a selected teaching activity.

_____ Has handled materials responsibly.

Based upon your evaluation and comments, check your recommendation concerning student teaching.

I ____ recommend ____ do not recommend this intern as a student teaching candidate.

Based upon your contact with this intern, please check the following:

I ____ would ____ would not want to be this student's cooperating teacher in the future.

The intern's strengths are:

Areas for improvement:

Additional comments:

Signature _____ Date _____