



University of  
**Pittsburgh**

School of Education

**University of Pittsburgh**  
**Teacher Candidate Handbook**  
**2022-2023**

**INTRODUCTION ..... 4**

**DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING, LEARNING, AND LEADING ..... 4**

**PRE-PLACEMENT SCREENING REQUIREMENTS ..... 4**

    TUBERCULIN TESTS ..... 4

    BACKGROUND CHECKS..... 5

    EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO BACKGROUND CHECKS ..... 6

**INTERNSHIP AND STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE ..... 6**

**CLINICAL PLACEMENT SITE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS ..... 6**

**REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF THE CLINICAL PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE ..... 7**

**EARLY EXPERIENCES ..... 8**

    DISTRICT-SPONSORED ORIENTATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ..... 8

    ORIENTATION ..... 8

    BEGINNING INSTRUCTIONAL AND MANAGERIAL DUTIES ..... 9

    ASSUMING TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES ..... 10

**GOALS OF THE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE..... 10**

**TEACHING COMPETENCIES AND GOALS OF THE PLACEMENT SITE ..... 10**

**RESPONDING TO ISSUES IN THE CLINICAL SETTING ..... 11**

    PRODUCTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING ..... 11

*Productive Mindset*..... 11

*Utilizing Support* ..... 13

**REMOVAL FROM A CLINICAL PLACEMENT SITE ..... 13**

**EVALUATION & GRADING ..... 14**

    PDE 430 ..... 14

    GRADE OPTION ..... 15

    GPA REQUIREMENT ..... 15

    UNSATISFACTORY RATING ..... 16

    GRADE DISPUTES ..... 17

    CANDIDATE RECORDS ..... 18

**THE COLLABORATIVE TRIAD ..... 18**

    ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CANDIDATES ..... 18

<i>Holidays</i> .....	19
<i>Absences and accommodation</i> .....	19
<i>Staff Development</i> .....	20
<i>Lesson Plans</i> .....	20
<i>MAT students: Disciplined Inquiry Portfolio Development &amp; Action Research Project</i> .....	21
<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTOR</b> .....	22
<i>Classroom Observation Form</i> .....	23
<i>Mentor's Stipends</i> .....	24
<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR</b> .....	24
<b>GENERAL POLICIES &amp; PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>25</b>
ATTIRE AND APPEARANCE .....	25
EMAIL POLICIES .....	25
SOCIAL MEDIA.....	26
STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY & CONTACT .....	26
VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDINGS .....	27
STRIKES AND WALKOUTS.....	27
WORK & FAMILY OBLIGATIONS.....	27
WORK IMPROVEMENT PLANS.....	28
WORK PRODUCT .....	28
<b>FIELD-BASED SITE LIAISON</b> .....	<b>28</b>
RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOST SCHOOL DISTRICT .....	29
<b>STUDENT PLACEMENT COORDINATOR &amp; UNIVERSITY SUPPORT</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>INTERN CERTIFICATION FOR MAT STUDENTS</b> .....	<b>30</b>
SUBSTITUTE TEACHING.....	31
<i>General Assumptions</i> .....	31
<i>Teaching Candidate &amp; District Responsibilities</i> .....	31
<i>University of Pittsburgh and Supervisor Responsibilities</i> .....	32
<b>ENTERING THE TEACHING PROFESSION</b> .....	<b>33</b>
GRADUATION .....	33
CERTIFICATION .....	33

<i>Instructional I Certificate</i> .....	33
<i>Instructional II Certificate</i> .....	34
LETTER OF VERIFICATION .....	34
<b>EXTENDED PLAN OF STUDIES</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b> .....	<b>43</b>

## Introduction

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The student teaching experience is one of the most challenging and exciting parts of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading’s teacher preparation programs, providing opportunities for direct involvement in the education of children and youth. It also requires candidates to function concurrently as students of teaching and teachers of students.

This handbook is designed to provide important information regarding policies and procedures as well as guidance related to the roles and responsibilities of candidates, mentors, and field supervisors.

Please read the contents of this handbook carefully. This is one of the many channels of communication that we maintain to create an enjoyable and productive teaching clinical experience. Questions, comments, concerns, and issues can be communicated to the Department via:

**Michelle Sobolak, Ph.D.**  
**Director of Teacher and Professional Education**  
[mjsobolak@pitt.edu](mailto:mjsobolak@pitt.edu)

## Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading

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Teacher Preparation programs at the University of Pittsburgh are housed in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading (TLL) and have been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Students who successfully complete a teacher preparation program and demonstrate satisfactory performance on the associated certification exam(s) (Praxis II, PECT, etc.) and the Pennsylvania Statewide Evaluation Form (PDE 430) are eligible to apply for Pennsylvania Instructional I certification.

## Pre-Placement Screening Requirements

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To obtain a clinical placement, candidates must first complete required background checks and other clearances needed for working with minors in school settings.

### Tuberculin Tests

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- 1) Obtain a negative tuberculin test.

A negative reading on a tuberculin test is required for students completing placements in school sites. The test can be taken at Pitt's Student Health Services (Wellness Center, Nordenberg Hall, 119 University Place), at a physician's office, or walk-in clinic (fees for this service vary by provider). In the event of a positive skin test, a chest x-ray or blood test must be performed, interpreted, and documented by a physician to confirm the absence of tuberculosis.

Copies of the test results should be uploaded to School of Education (SOE) Clearance System and given to the principal and/or nurse at the cooperating school. Candidates should also keep a copy of the test results. The tuberculin test is usually valid for 2 years although some school districts may require more frequent testing.

## **Background Checks**

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According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, all pre-service teachers (observation students, practicum students, student teachers, candidates, etc.) are required to comply with established regulations documented in the Public-School Code. Under this code, all individuals who are entering a school site to work with students or teachers must obtain the required criminal and child abuse clearances PRIOR to beginning the clinical experience. These clearances must be uploaded to the [School of Education \(SOE\) Clearance System](#) by the deadline specified and be presented to the school site either when requested or upon the initial visit.

The regulation reads:

*"ALL student teachers (participating in classroom teaching, internships, clinical or field experiences) and prospective employees (including but not limited to administrators, teachers, substitutes, janitors, cafeteria workers, office employees) of public and private schools, IUs, and area vocational-technical schools, including independent contractors and their employees and bus drivers, who have direct contact with children, must provide to their employer a copy of their Pennsylvania State Criminal History Background Check and their Federal Criminal History Record that cannot be more than one (1) year old."*

*Note:* this regulation also applies to University Supervisors working with pre-service teachers and to researchers who are working in classrooms with teachers and students.

**2)** Complete the following four criminal history background checks:

- Federal Criminal History Record
- Pennsylvania Criminal History Report – PA Act 34
- Child Abuse Clearance – PA Act 33/151
- Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form—PA Act 24/82

**3)** Complete the following child protection trainings/laws and upload proof of completion into Pitt's online clearance system:

- Allegheny County Mandated Reporter Form

Familiarize yourself with your responsibilities as a mandated reporter via the [Allegheny County website](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/mandated-reporter.aspx) (<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/mandated-reporter.aspx>)

- Protecting Children from Abuse Online Course Certificate

Access this course by following the directions in Appendix B. Once you have successfully completed the course, print your certificate and upload into Pitt's online clearance system.

## **Expectations Related to Background Checks**

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For student teachers, criminal history checks must be current – obtained no later than one year prior to the last day of the clinical experience. All incoming candidates must obtain new clearances during the summer prior to enrollment.

If any of the clearances show an arrest, conviction or other irregularity, candidates must immediately bring this to the attention of the Student Placement Coordinator. It is also the teacher candidate's responsibility to inform the coordinator if their employment was ever terminated due to child endangerment.

School districts have wide latitude in determining who will be allowed in their schools. As such, any background check irregularities will be brought to the proposed placement site's attention. The district will, at that time, decide whether they will accept a candidate for placement. If a proposed district does not accept a candidate because of a criminal history check issue, the university will determine next steps on a case-by-case basis.

The School of Education **does not** guarantee placement for students with criminal records.

## **Internship and Student Teaching Experience**

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The student teaching and internship experiences at the University of Pittsburgh are classroom-based clinical experiences designed to provide teacher candidates with a comprehensive view of the work of a teacher. The experience not only allows candidates to work through a curriculum for an extended period, but also to critically examine how students work with and through that curriculum over the course of an academic year. Candidates are afforded the opportunity to engage with the learning community and culture that exists within the classroom, school, and wider social community in authentic, meaningful ways.

Despite the richness of the University of Pittsburgh clinical experiences, we understand that candidates are also at the beginning of their training in education and pedagogy. Even though candidates are content experts in their area of instruction, we do not assume they are ready to take the role of the teacher at the beginning of their placement. Candidates still require the direction and guidance of faculty, assigned mentors, university supervisors, and other support providers to help them understand how to develop and implement effective instruction and professionalism.

## **Clinical Placement Site Assignment Process**

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The learning experience within a specific K-12 school context (clinical placement) is a crucial component for any teacher preparation program. In the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading, ensuring high

quality placements for all teaching candidates is our priority when making assignments. We take seriously our obligation to provide high-quality field placements which allow our student teachers to:

- Observe best practices implemented by a more experienced teacher
- Fully engage in the professional work of teaching: planning, implementing, and reflecting on instruction; interacting with parents; and collaborating with other educational professionals
- Explore and apply instructional approaches learned during teacher preparation coursework at Pitt

When assigning teacher candidates to field placements, we consider several factors. In order of importance, these are:

- 1) Availability of high-quality placements.** These are places where experienced and effective mentor teachers can support teacher candidates. We give preference to placements with mentor teachers with whom we have worked successfully in the past and to placements in collaborative school sites that support cohorts of teacher candidates.
- 2) Accessibility for field supervisors.** Our field supervisors play an important role in helping teacher candidates to make connections between what they learn at Pitt and what they practice in the classroom. Their support, guidance, and feedback are a key component to teachers' learning throughout the program.
- 3) General geographic preference of the teacher candidate.** We do our best to accommodate requests of teacher candidates, understanding that transportation issues are of concern.

Please note the following placement requests that will not be considered:

- Specific schools or districts. We consider general geographic preferences only.
- Placements with specific teachers or mentors. The research on this point is clear – teacher candidates are more successful when they work with professional mentors with whom they do not have prior personal relationships.
- Placements in a K-12 school or district from which a candidate graduated or to which candidates has significant ties (relatives or friends working in the district, children in the district, etc.). The exceptions to this policy are: 1) We will place students in Pittsburgh Public Schools even if they are graduates of the district. PPS is sufficiently large that it is possible for us to place candidates in schools other than those they personally attended or have connections to. 2) If the only high-quality placement available for a candidate is in a school district from which he/she graduated, we will consider placing candidates there.

## **Required Elements of the Clinical Placement Experience**

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While the characteristics of placement sites vary from school to school, several common elements should be included in every clinical experience. Each University of Pittsburgh Teacher Preparation program has its own [phase-in and related guidelines](http://app.education.pitt.edu/teacherprep/), which can be accessed at <http://app.education.pitt.edu/teacherprep/>. These guidelines are general recommendations, and the university realizes that a candidate may progress

through the competencies outlined at either a slightly faster or slower pace depending on the unique needs of candidates and the characteristics of the school site.

If a placement site intends to require a candidate to work in unique or unconventional ways or proposes to use a model distinctly different from that in the phase-in guideline, ***the district is expected to clarify, in writing, the elements of the clinical experience which are unique.*** This should also be negotiated with and approved by the Student Placement Coordinator (who is in communication with Program Coordinators and faculty) at the University of Pittsburgh, so all vested participants are clear that the expectations are reasonable, realistic, and contribute to the learning of the students of the school district and candidates from the University of Pittsburgh.

## Early Experiences

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Teaching candidates participate in university-based courses, seminars, and workshops during the early weeks of their programs. These early experiences provide opportunities to study theories and methods of instruction in the specialty area.

In the clinical site, candidates will be asked to document early field experiences as outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. University supervisors will facilitate the documentation of these experiences and will communicate the deadlines for submitting documentation (usually mid to late fall term but varying by program).

### District-Sponsored Orientation and Professional Development

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Prior to the start of the school year, candidates may be invited to participate in district-sponsored programs for beginning teachers. These programs are designed to familiarize candidates with the communities, schools, and classrooms in which they will work. Candidates may also be invited to participate in other school-based induction and staff development programs sponsored by the district throughout the school year with the understanding that their participation may be limited or hindered due to their course schedule at the University of Pittsburgh.

### Orientation

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Since candidates are new to the teaching profession, it is critical that their initial experiences at the school provide opportunities for observation and professional socialization under the close supervision of the mentor. During the early weeks of the fall semester, candidates should observe their mentors teaching all assigned classes and performing all aspects of their responsibilities. Candidates should also be scheduled to observe other teachers and become familiar with the wide range of teaching styles used at the school site. We request that mentor teachers assist in facilitating these observations with other faculty members for their student teacher.

Additionally, we ask that candidates acquaint themselves with administrators, students, and support staff; learn how the curriculum is organized by grade level and subject field; study the methods used to assess student progress and achievement; identify the kinds of resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, materials) available to support instruction and learning; and take special note of the ways in which teachers work-- independently and cooperatively-- to improve the total

educational process. Some examples of appropriate activities for candidates during this period of orientation are as follows:

- Tour the school and community. Read the school handbook. Become familiar with general policies and procedures governing the professional conduct of teachers.
- Learn routines for carrying out duties and supervisory assignments.
- Make seating charts. Learn the names of students.
- Observe mentor’s methods used to create and maintain a supportive, encouraging, attractive, and safe environment.
- Study the students. Get to know their abilities, needs, and special talents.
- Observe how the mentor and other teachers create a community of learners and manage the classroom.
- Observe how the mentor and other teachers carry out instructional duties in academic classes (e.g., develop rapport with students, introduce new material, give directions, ask questions, guide individual and group practice, use instructional materials and audiovisual aids, evaluate student progress, offer feedback, accommodate individual differences, reflects upon his/her own teaching, etc.).

### **Beginning Instructional and Managerial Duties**

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During the orientation period, candidates will be assigned to assist the mentor with selected instructional and managerial activities. Examples of such activities include:

Management Tasks	Individualized Instruction
Episodic Teaching	Small Group Instruction
Preparing and duplicating materials	Grading papers and tests
Checking homework	Setting up equipment
Taking attendance	Designing bulletin boards
Proctoring tests	Establishing learning centers
Leading a discussion	Supervising a reading group
Working with advanced students	Monitoring small group activities
Helping students complete missed assignments	
Tutoring students to assist with comprehension of content	
Listening to students read a story	
Providing remediation or enrichment to a small group of students	
Planning 10-15-minute focused teaching episodes or mini-lessons	
Reviewing plans and materials with the mentor	
Participating in feedback conferences with the mentor	

## **Assuming Teaching Responsibilities**

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Although each teacher certification program has provided phase-in guidelines, the timeline for and degree to which candidates assume teaching responsibilities is an individual process and must be made jointly with input from candidates, the mentor, and the university supervisor. As candidates assume responsibility for teaching, they should have continual support, input, and feedback from the mentor teacher. This is essential for the growth of candidates and the most effective instruction of the students.

The mentor is expected to make frequent observations and participate in scheduled feedback conferences with candidates. Supervisors from the university will also observe and confer with candidates regularly throughout the year.

## **Goals of the Clinical Experience**

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- 1) To provide candidates an intensive field-based clinical experience that develops the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for a career in teaching.
- 2) To introduce candidates to the auxiliary services of the school and community and explain how these services support the overall education process.
- 3) To provide candidates with opportunities to observe and assist experienced master teachers.
- 4) To provide candidates with experience in planning instructional activities, designing curriculum materials, practicing appropriate styles of teaching, experimenting with advanced technology, and evaluating learners' progress and achievement.
- 5) To provide candidates with opportunities to engage in reflective self-analysis of their own teaching performance and to use constructive feedback from others to refine their teaching skills.
- 6) To involve candidates in the academic and extracurricular activities of the school.
- 7) To encourage candidates to draw upon theories of instruction and learning covered in graduate theory/methods courses to solve practical problems.
- 8) To sequentially provide candidates with increasingly comprehensive and complex experiences in classroom instruction.
- 9) To permit candidates to demonstrate pedagogical performance skills which warrant recommendation for a teaching certificate in his/her specialty area.

## **Teaching Competencies and Goals of the Placement Site**

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The primary mission of Pitt's Teacher Education Programs is to prepare exemplary teachers for tomorrow's schools. To accomplish this mission, we have designed our programs so that teacher candidates will possess the following general attributes and competencies before they are endorsed for certification.

- A sound general liberal arts background in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.
- In-depth knowledge and skills in the academic discipline(s) associated with their intended teaching field.

- A strong commitment to students and their learning.
- Knowledge of individual, social, and cultural differences among learners and how these differences affect teaching and learning.
- The knowledge of and professional performance skills in classroom management, including the ability to provide supportive learning environments.
- The knowledge of and professional performance skills in appropriate procedures for student evaluation.
- The knowledge and skills to integrate technology into teaching.
- The knowledge and skills to link state, local and national standards to curriculum and instruction.
- A firm grasp of content and pedagogy with the ability to design effective instruction for students including the knowledge to manage and implement lessons that contain such features as:
  - Big Ideas/Learning Goals/Objectives
  - Engaging Students in Instruction/Anticipatory/Motivational Sets
  - Multiple modes of instruction
  - Multiple modes of assessment
  - High Cognitive Tasks and Activities
  - Closure/Step Back
  - Follow up
  - Differentiated Instruction for Students with Disabilities

The personal qualities (e.g. communication skills, flexibility, self-confidence, initiative, etc.) and attitudes, skills, and dispositions required for being a reflective, collaborative teacher and a self-directed, career-long learner.

## Responding to Issues in the Clinical Setting

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### Productive Problem Solving

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Teacher candidates will face a variety of challenges in their clinical placement sites and within their courses here at the University of Pittsburgh. For their part, we expect candidates to engage in productive problem solving to address these challenges. Two important aspects of productive problem solving are the following:

#### PRODUCTIVE MINDSET

When we encounter a challenge, we have choices about how to respond – but often, we don't recognize those choices. In fact, most of the time, challenges provoke strong emotional responses. These emotional responses, whether we are aware of them or not, overwhelm our ability to think creatively about the variety of ways in which we might address an issue or overcome a problem.

This becomes particularly problematic when we encounter situations in which we feel fear, a common occurrence for teachers-in-training. For example:

*One of the students in a teacher candidate's class is almost always disengaged with the instructional activities. He frequently texts on his cell phone during class (even though this is explicitly against school policy) or simply puts his head down and sleeps. When the teacher candidate attempts to include him in the day's activities, the student ignores her altogether or simply stares but does not respond.*

In this type of situation, a teacher candidate often feels fear – that confronting the challenging student will provoke an embarrassing confrontation, that their mentor teacher or field supervisor will think they are not doing a good job because they can't get the student to participate, fear that they are “failing” or that maybe they aren't going to be a good teacher after all.

The most common response to a situation like this is for the candidate to seek to explain or justify behavior in a way that preserves their own sense of self-worth. For example, the candidate might tell themselves that their mentor teacher has not done an adequate job of setting expectations or enforcing them, so this student's behavior is not something that can be effectively addressed. Or the candidate might reason that the student is lazy and really has no desire to learn. Both rationales remove responsibility for addressing the challenging situation from the candidates and place blame onto someone else.

This is just one example, but it serves to illustrate a pattern – when we feel threatened (e.g. when situations challenge our sense of being capable and competent), we experience fear. When we experience fear, we respond by attempting to protect ourselves. Locating responsibility for problems outside of ourselves is a protective strategy, but it's also highly unproductive.

A productive mindset for problem-solving is one where the individuals involved exercise **non-judgment**, **assume positive intent**, and **strive for compassion**. Let's revisit our example to see how these mindsets might change the way teacher candidates respond to a challenging student. Rather than thinking that the student is “lazy” or “likes to break the rules,” the candidate simply notices the behavior without judging it. They notice that the student rarely engages in learning activities and frequently uses his cell phone during class.

The candidate chooses to look at the situation by assuming that the student's behavior is not a deliberate attempt to anger them, make them appear incompetent, or cause them to feel badly. Instead, they assume the student is acting in ways that enable him to avoid feeling badly. He is protecting himself.

By intentionally viewing the situation in this way, the teacher candidate can feel compassion for the student and can feel more empowered to explore different strategies to address the problem because they feel less fearful and threatened by it.

The second aspect of productive problem solving is **utilizing available resources and support**. We expect that teacher candidates will consult with their mentor teachers, field supervisors, and Pitt faculty when they encounter issues or struggles in their classrooms. Candidates are also encouraged to share concerns with and seek advice from their program coordinators or Dr. Michelle Sobolak, Director of Teacher Education. We support students who are experiencing difficulties in a variety of ways: increased observations, work plans with clear expectations for candidate improvement, and increased communication between the university and the school site.

Candidates should expect that mentors, field supervisors, and Pitt faculty/staff will also exercise non-judgment, assume positive intent, and strive for compassion during the problem-solving process. The goal should be to come to a clear understanding of the issue/s, including developing capacity to interpret events or concerns from various points of view, and to devise a plan of action that will resolve the problem. Candidates should not expect that their field supervisor, mentor, or anyone to solve the problem for them. Instead, they should expect to receive advice and support as they deepen their own capacity to be patient, resilient problem-solvers.

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### Removal from a Clinical Placement Site

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Occasionally, a teaching candidate may be asked to leave a school site. **This request, when made by the mentor teacher or another representative of the clinical site, will be honored immediately, regardless of the reason given.**

The university supervisor, candidate, Student Placement Coordinator, Director of Teacher Education, or departmental faculty may also make requests for a candidate's removal from a clinical site. If such a request is made by a university representative, it should be after a reasonable attempt at addressing the issue(s) at hand (with increased observations, work plans with clear expectations for candidate improvement, and increased communication between the university and the school site when possible).

If a teacher education candidate is removed from their site for any reason, **they are not to contact any site personnel (mentor teacher, principal, etc.) for any reason following notification of removal.** University faculty or staff will obtain candidates' personal belongings that remain at the site after removal and will return any district items that remain with candidates.

The University of Pittsburgh reserves the right to decline re-placement to a candidate who has been removed from his or her placement site. In such circumstances, a candidate would be unable to complete the requirements for teacher certification at the University of Pittsburgh, which may also negatively impact candidates' ability to complete his or her degree program.

Any candidate who is removed from a clinical site will not be permitted to register for any further university coursework requiring field experience.

## Evaluation & Grading

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Teaching candidates are evaluated in two ways. The first evaluation consists of one official standard evaluation during each term in the clinical site corresponding with the official University grading periods (i.e., end of Fall term, Spring term, and Summer I session).

The University grade option used for the clinical experiences include Honors (H), Satisfactory (S), or Unsatisfactory (U). Evaluation forms will be provided by the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading. Mentors and supervisors may also use other evaluation instruments to supplement the information gathered with the standard forms. In addition to the official evaluations, candidates are evaluated mid-term in each full semester they are in a clinical site.

The preparation and sharing of the standard evaluation form are left to the discretion of the parties involved. However, it is recommended that this be a cooperative venture and that candidates offer comments and reactions about the written evaluation.

The university supervisor will coordinate all evaluation forms. Once completed and signed, teaching candidates will upload them into TaskStream. The final evaluation form becomes part of the student's permanent record. Copies of all evaluation forms must be signed by the mentor, the university supervisor, and candidates. Signature does not mean agreement—any of the parties may attach a note of explanation if they do not agree with the rating or evaluation.

The second form of evaluation for candidates is the *Pennsylvania Statewide Evaluation form for Student Professional Knowledge and Practice (PDE 430)*. Each student will be provided training related to completing the PDE 430. All candidates are required to collect evidence during the clinical experience to verify that they have demonstrated competencies in the four domains that are included in the PDE 430 Evaluation. These domains or categories include Planning and Preparation, Instructional Delivery, Classroom Environment, and Professionalism. Though the mentor and supervisor should assist candidates in suggesting and selecting artifacts for inclusion as evidence, it is the responsibility of candidates to develop the portfolio and the supervisor to assess the portfolio. Throughout the course of the clinical experience, support will be provided to explain and support candidates' work for the PDE 430.

### **PDE 430**

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This evaluation instrument was developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a performance-based assessment to evaluate a teacher candidate's proficiency and skills in the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism. Candidates create a portfolio that will have both Formative and Summative assessments. A score of 4 with a minimum of 1 point in each domain is required to be recommended for certification. The PDE 430 is evidence-based and reflective.

A passing score on the PDE 430 does not guarantee certification. Passing grades/scores must be obtained in all other required components in addition to the PDE 430 for the University to recommend a candidate for certification.

## **Grade Option**

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Courses taken under the H/S/U option carry credit toward graduation and certification but are not used in computing the quality point average.

Although the mentor plays a vital role in the evaluation process, the official grades for clinical experience are assigned by the university supervisor. The Student Placement Coordinator and/or Program Coordinator are authorized to resolve grade-related conflicts that may arise among candidates, mentor, and university supervisor.

Students' practicum, student teaching, and/or internship grades are based on multiple factors: related coursework (the practicum and seminar classes), work in the field placement, professionalism in the placement and in dealings with supervisors and mentors, and complete and on-time work on all mandated certification requirements (such as the Early Field Competencies and PDE 430). A student can only earn a grade of H if a grade of H in ALL the categories above is earned. A student who misses any deadlines for mandated certification requirements cannot earn a grade of H for practicum, student teaching, or internship credits. Additionally, a student can only receive a grade of S in the practicum, student teaching or internship if ALL requirements above are satisfactorily completed. Students who do not complete ALL the requirements above will earn a grade of U and will be in danger of academic probation, removal from placement and/or a delay in certification.

Grades of G, I or W may also be given in special cases. The G grade is given when clinical experience teaching assignments are unfinished due to extenuating circumstances, such as serious illness or injury. With a G grade the work must be completed within a year of the issuance of the grade. The I grade is given for incomplete work and is used rarely in cases that warrant special attention.

There is no time frame to complete work associated with an I grade, however, if a substantial length of time passes between course work and completion of clinical experience, the Program Coordinator may require additional courses. Grades of G and I grades are only used for extreme hardship cases, not in cases of clear incompetence or lack of effort.

G, I and W grades may negatively impact a candidate's ability to receive financial assistance. Conditions for financial aid eligibility usually require students to complete a specified number of credits each year and maintain a specified grade point average (GPA: credits counting toward the degree). Questions about the effect of unsatisfactory academic standing on financial aid should be directed to the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid in Alumni Hall at 412-624-7488.

## **GPA Requirement**

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All students enrolled for teacher education study are required to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0. The cumulative GPA is based on all course work taken after enrollment for teacher education study. A student is automatically placed on academic probation if the cumulative GPA, exclusive of transfer credits, falls below 3.0. No student on academic probation is permitted to participate in student teaching, a teaching internship, or an advanced teaching practicum. Although the credits allowed for acceptable work completed elsewhere by transfer count toward the total number of credits required for teacher education study, the grades earned in such courses

are not included in GPA computations. No student is permitted to continue in the program when a failing grade is obtained in certification coursework.

## **Unsatisfactory Rating**

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A support system and set of procedures are implemented for candidates in danger of receiving an unsatisfactory rating at any time during the clinical experience. This warning system features a written report detailing unsatisfactory areas of candidates experience and will be made known to candidates by the university supervisor and the mentor teacher. The Student Placement Coordinator and/or Director of Teacher Education may be asked to participate.

- 1) The university supervisor and the mentor teacher, in conjunction with candidates, will set a reasonable timeline for improvement of these problem areas with a clear work plan and expectations. The Program Coordinator will inform the student's faculty and the Student Placement Coordinator about the unsatisfactory report and the recommended plan for improvement.
- 2) If, at the end of the established time period, the student has not made satisfactory progress in the problem areas, the matter will be turned over to the program coordinator in the specialty area in which the student is enrolled. The Program coordinator, Director of Teacher Education, and Student Placement Coordinator will determine whether the student will be permitted to continue in their field experience, and candidates will be counseled regarding further options. If a "U" is issued to an Intern or Student Teacher, the ability to be certified will be revoked by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- 3) The determination of final letter grades for the clinical experience is the joint responsibility of the mentor and supervisor. However, the university is ultimately responsible for assigning grades and endorsing applications for certification. Students who receive unsatisfactory (U) or incomplete (G/I) grades will be required to repeat all or part of the clinical experience. In some cases, the University faculty, the Student Placement Coordinator and/or school district may not approve a repeated clinical experience and may, instead, recommend that the student exit the program. Input from mentors/clinical instructors and a supervisor is routinely sought whenever a candidate's status in the program is in jeopardy.

If a clinical experience needs to be extended or repeated due to a U, I or G grade, the following guidelines will govern the registration of credits in subsequent terms:

- If a U, I or G grade was earned for any reason other than medical, the student will register for full-time clinical experience credits in the term in which he/she plans to student teach.
- If a G grade was earned due to a documented medical issue, the student will register for 1 clinical experience credit + fees for the term in which he/she plans to student teach, unless enough time has passed in which case candidates will need to register for full-time clinical experience credits.
- The program coordinator will set the time limit for completing I or G grade coursework in writing. This is not to exceed one year but may be limited to one or two semesters.

The following steps will be implemented to support students in danger of earning a U grade:

- Candidates are notified of the areas of concern/weakness, in writing (copy to Student Placement Coordinator/Program Coordinator or Director of Teacher Education)
- A work plan is created that clearly communicates expectations and specific steps candidates must take to remediate deficiencies (copy to Student Placement Coordinator/Program Coordinator or Director of Teacher Education)
- A timeline is established that allows candidates a reasonable amount of time to work on the deficiencies/concerns/weaknesses. This may require candidates to register for additional clinical experience hours in a later term (copy to Student Placement Coordinator/Program Coordinator or Director of Teacher Education)
- An intensive schedule of observation, feedback, and support is delineated for the supervisor and mentor to conduct to assist candidates in meeting expectations

**NOTE:** At any stage in this process the Student Placement Coordinator and/or Program Coordinator and/or Director of Teacher Education may be asked to intervene (developing a work plan, timeline, providing observation/feedback, etc.).

**NOTE:** If a student is removed from a school site, depending on the circumstances for removal, a U grade may be assigned. Receiving a U grade would lead to removal from the site and possibly from the program.

After all the above steps have been completed without candidate progress, a meeting between candidates, mentor, supervisor, and/or the Student Placement Coordinator/Program Coordinator/Director of Teacher Ed. should be set to issue an Unsatisfactory grade.

*A W grade is given when a student officially resigns or withdraws from the Program.*

*If a candidate goes onto academic probation, he or she will not be allowed to continue in his or her clinical experience and will be required to meet with the Director of Teacher Education to discuss options for continuing in the program if it is a possibility.*

## **Grade Disputes**

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Occasionally, a university supervisor, mentor, or candidate may disagree regarding a grade or evaluation of performance. When this occurs, the following steps are advised:

- 1) All parties document their perceptions of candidate's performance and their expectations for that student.
- 2) A work plan is developed with input from the supervisor, mentor, candidate, and Student Placement Coordinator (if needed) that delineates clear expectations and how candidates will demonstrate his work and growth in meeting those expectations.
- 3) A timetable for reassessing candidate's work is established.
- 4) After a defined period, all parties will discuss candidate's progress and skills and will discuss a grade. Ultimately, it is the supervisor's responsibility to determine the final grade; however, the supervisor should rely on the feedback given by the mentor teacher.

## Candidate Records

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Several sets of files are maintained for each candidate in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Leading. Permanent records about candidates' experience are maintained in TaskStream and serve as a repository for documents that may be needed by future employers or state certification agencies.

The information in TaskStream is sometimes used by the Student Placement Coordinator, Program Coordinators, or select university faculty members for purposes of research and program evaluation. It may also be used to verify that a student has completed requirements for graduation and/or certification.

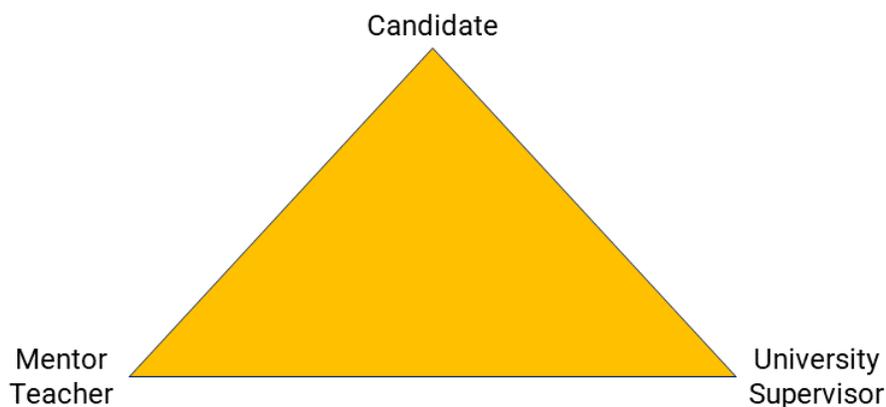
Names of students and identifying information are never used in evaluation or research studies. The Student Placement Coordinator and program faculty from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading are the only parties with access to this information. After graduation, university personnel maintain access to TaskStream documentation.

## The Collaborative Triad

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The teaching clinical experience is a collaborative venture established between the University of Pittsburgh and the cooperating school district. Though there are many individuals working to ensure the success of the collaboration, those who are most directly involved include candidates, mentor teacher, and university supervisor.

The success of the clinical experience hinges upon the quality of social and professional relationships developed within this triad. Each partner is vested and contributes to candidates' professional growth. Thus, it is essential that all members of the triad have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. Continuous three-way communication is critical for the triad's operational effectiveness. The responsibilities of each of these individuals are outlined in the following sections.



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CANDIDATES

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Candidates have many personal, professional, and academic obligations throughout the clinical experience, including those listed below:

- 1) Become familiar with and follow the calendar of the cooperating school. This includes in-service days, orientation days, conference days, holidays, and workshops.

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## HOLIDAYS

Candidates follow their assigned school district's schedule once the clinical experience begins, including the observance of the same legal holidays. Exceptions may be made for religious holidays as per the University of Pittsburgh policy. It is the student teacher's responsibility to inform the mentor and university supervisor of any planned absences for religious holidays at least a week in advance.

- 2) Follow the daily time schedule as agreed upon by the mentor teacher and candidate (taking into consideration the phase-in guidelines and the mentor teacher's schedule). We strongly recommend sharing at least one planning period per day and having consistent instructional time.
- 3) Be punctual. Consistent tardiness is inexcusable.
- 4) Maintain regular attendance. Candidates are assigned to the cooperating school for the entire school year and are not allocated a designated number of sick days. However, calling off for illness should be done with extreme discretion. Candidates must leave all relevant lesson plans for the day of absence.

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## ABSENCES AND ACCOMMODATION

The only excused absences are for serious illness and/or a death in the family. Candidates are permitted two absences for interviews for teaching positions, and these absences require advance approval from the mentor, supervisor, and program coordinator. Candidates also have one personal day each term of student teaching for a total of two personal days for the full year. These must be approved in advance by the mentor teacher(s), supervisor(s) and program coordinator and all relevant lesson plans must be provided for the day of absence. **Candidates must notify the mentor, supervisor, and program coordinator when they cannot report to school or perform their assigned duties.** This should be done as far in advance as possible. The mentor will inform candidates about deadlines and procedures for notification specific to their district. Candidates must prepare substitute plans for the mentor to use while they are out.

Our ability to recommend candidates for certification is dependent on adherence to rigorous standards that have been submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Non-adherence to rigorous participation in the clinical site may result in the inability of the university to recommend a candidate for certification. As such, if a candidate must miss five or more days at the clinical site, a meeting will be held to determine an appropriate plan of action, which may result in postponing the clinical experience to a time when candidates is better able to participate rigorously.

In cases of absences related to illness, the student is under no obligation to provide medical information directly to any representative of the university or the clinical site, although a

physician's note describing the length of time candidates should be "excused" from the site would be appreciated.

If a candidate has a disability, illness or injury that will require accommodation, they must document this with the Office of Disabilities Resources and Services in the William Pitt Union. This will allow the mentor, university supervisor, and Manager of Placement Services and Clinical Practices to make accommodations at the field site, if needed. Accommodations will only be made for candidates who have documented disabilities with the Office of Disabilities Resources and Services.

- 5) Establish positive working relationships with all personnel in the cooperating school and with the university supervisor.
- 6) Perform the same teaching and non-teaching duties as the mentor, including participation in faculty meetings, parent-teacher conferences, staff development programs, extracurricular functions, etc. whenever possible. Realize that teaching extends beyond the classroom and make efforts to connect with students outside of the classroom experience. In some cases, candidates may have to report a few days early for the clinical assignment.

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## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Teaching professionals participate in many educational programs sponsored by local school districts and/or teachers' organizations. These staff development activities include orientation and induction programs for beginning teachers, as well as continuing programs for veteran teachers. Candidates are expected to take part in school-based staff development activities, especially those conducted for new teachers. Some of these sessions may occur after school hours; in that case, candidates are expected to attend their university classes if in session.

- 7) Organize the planning and implementation of instruction. Lesson and unit plans must be prepared and submitted to the mentor prior to implementation. This allows the mentor teacher to offer suggestions and/or give approval. Adhere to the schedule established by the mentor for when lesson plans are to be submitted.

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## LESSON PLANS

Candidates are expected to prepare written lesson plans for every lesson taught. The format of the lesson plan may depend upon the subject, grade level, and learner population being taught. Mentors and university supervisors may also have special preferences for how lesson plans should be written. Generally, a complete lesson plan requires candidates to make decisions about:

- Objectives tied to Pennsylvania's Academic Standards
- Content coverage
- Learning preferences and styles
- Instructional materials
- Organization and management

- Evaluation criteria and procedures

Guidelines for the preparation of lesson plans should be obtained from the mentor teacher, university supervisor, and/or methods instructors in each specialty area. After candidates demonstrates competency with planning and instructional delivery within a class, the supervisor and mentor may permit candidates to use a modified lesson plan that still contains the essential elements necessary for thoughtful, deliberate lesson design and instructional planning.

No candidate will be allowed to teach a lesson without a prepared lesson plan. Candidates are responsible for submitting lesson plans to the mentor and university supervisor by a mutually agreed upon deadline prior to each teaching assignment. Copies of all lesson plans should be retained by candidates in a binder and should be available to the supervisor for review.

Ideally, feedback and suggestions on the planning should be given to candidates prior to the implementation of the lesson so that the lesson plan can be revised for the greatest opportunity for successful implementation.

- 8)** Use the supportive and corrective feedback given by the mentor and university supervisor to become a reflective practitioner and to improve instructional practices.
- 9)** Complete a formal reflection at the close of each conference. Have the university supervisor or the mentor teacher initial the reflection.
- 10)** Furnish the university supervisor with a complete classroom schedule.
- 11)** Facilitate the scheduling of formal observations and conference periods with both the mentor and university supervisor.
- 12)** Complete all assignments made by the mentor and university supervisor, in addition to all university course-related assignments.
- 13)** Attend all university classes and meetings on time – take this work as seriously as your work at the school site.
- 14)** Prepare a portfolio that highlights reflective thinking and multiple modes of instruction including evidence for the successful completion of the four domains of the PDE 430 assessment.
  - Can be mined for Employment/Professional Portfolio
  - Illustrates Competencies, Growth, Best Practices

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## MAT STUDENTS: DISCIPLINED INQUIRY PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT & ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

All MAT students are required to develop a portfolio and complete an Action Research Project of their professional growth and practice during the clinical experience. This portfolio replaces the Comprehensive Examination for the master's degree. The Action Research project replaces the master's thesis Paper.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTOR**

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The mentor teacher is a significant member of the collaborative triad. The mentors affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh Teacher Preparation programs are experienced master teachers with an interest in and commitment to the training and induction of beginning teachers to the profession. Mentor teachers have an appropriate professional educator certification, at least 3 years of satisfactory certificated teaching, and the endorsement of the administration at their school site and district to serve in the capacity of mentor teacher. We also prefer that mentors have at least 1 year of certified teaching experience in the school entities where candidates are placed.

*Note: A website is available for supporting the work of the mentors and supervisors: <http://app.education.pitt.edu/teacherprep/>*

This site contains information on training and support for working with candidates and copies of all handbooks and forms needed for supervision. Mentors understand learning as an active, social, and constructive process and are supportive of instruction consistent with this view. Below are suggested guidelines to assist mentors in performing their roles and responsibilities.

- 15)** Establish clear, communication with assigned teaching candidate early (preferably during the summer prior to the clinical experience) and maintain this communication throughout the experience.
- 16)** Develop a schedule for candidate in consultation with their university supervisor and the building administrator. Candidate schedules should take the following into consideration: sharing a planning period with the mentor and being present for a minimum of 3 instructional classes by the end of the clinical experience. The mentor should allow candidates to gradually assume teaching duties, following the suggestions of the university supervisor, mentor teacher, and program guidelines.
- 17)** Familiarize candidate with the classroom, school, and community environments. Arrange observations with other faculty members at the site and help candidate process the observations with focused debriefing via discussion.
- 18)** Become acquainted with candidate and acknowledge them as a professional colleague that has much to contribute to the learning environment and classroom culture. Recognize that the candidate's role is unique – it does not fall into the traditional student teacher role nor is it an instructional assistant. The teaching candidate phases into teaching duties in a gradual and realistic manner, following the suggestions of the University supervisor, the mentor teacher, and the program guidelines
- 19)** Orient candidates to the curriculum. Explain the past and future activities that will occur during the clinical experience assignment. Allow candidates to accept responsibilities for instruction of students.
- 20)** Clarify candidate's roles and responsibilities at the very outset of the experience. Tell them exactly what is expected and why. Mentors should understand that learning to teach is a developmental process and are specially trained to guide novice professionals through their first year of practice.

- 21)** Assist candidate in planning for instruction. Observe and coach candidate in the classroom as a means of improving their teaching, management, and evaluation skills. Offer specific feedback in a positive and constructive manner.
- 22)** Model effective planning and teaching. Make explicit your practices and experiences.
- 23)** Becoming a teacher is a gradual process. Please be patient with candidate and offer encouragement throughout their development.
- 24)** Recognize that candidate is beginning a clinical experience around the same time as he or she is taking pedagogy coursework. Candidate is at the beginning of the experience and needs much support in learning about and contextualizing educational theory, pedagogy, and instructional design.
- 25)** Orient candidate to all aspects of teaching: working with parents, working with special needs students, professional growth and development, etc.
- 26)** Expect candidate to engage in reflective self-evaluation. Ask questions. Encourage candidate to describe, evaluate, and refine his/her own teaching. Allow candidate to interact with other candidates, student teachers, and regular teachers in your school.
- 27)** Work closely with the university supervisor, district site coordinator, and the Student Placement Coordinator. Confer with candidates and university supervisor regularly concerning the progress of candidates.
- 28)** Complete one written formal observation each week on candidate's teaching. Documentation is critical.

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### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM

When candidates are observed by the university supervisor or mentor, the observer should complete a *Classroom Observation Form* and provide it to candidates. These forms enable the observer to describe, evaluate, and suggest improvements in performance. They also identify the focus of subsequent observations and track growth. The observation forms should be duplicated for the mentor and/or supervisor as well. Lastly, the observer should meet with candidates to discuss the observation and/or suggestions for improvement.

*These forms may be downloaded from <http://app.education.pitt.edu/teacherprep/>*

- 29)** If conflicts or problems arise, discuss them confidentially with candidate and university supervisor. If this does not address the problem, immediately reach out to the Student Teaching Coordinator for assistance.
- 30)** Serve as an advocate for candidates in the district; be certain that the district is using candidates in ways consistent with the agreement set forth in this handbook and in ways that contribute to their growth and development as an educator.
- 31)** Participate in special university or school-based training sessions for mentors as offered.
- 32)** Complete standard evaluation forms for candidates at least once per semester. Submit these directly to the university supervisor or candidate for upload into TaskStream. If appropriate, evaluate candidates using school district evaluating procedures.

- 33)** If you support your candidate's entry to the profession, write a letter of recommendation for his/her university placement file.
- 34)** Maintain confidentiality regarding candidate's progress and work with other faculty members at the field site.

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### MENTOR'S STIPENDS

Mentor teachers will be compensated for working with candidates; for the University to process this payment, the mentor will be issued a contract. The contract must be returned by September unless otherwise specified. If there are questions or concerns about the contract or payment, please contact the Student Teaching Coordinator.

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### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

The university supervisor is an employee of the University of Pittsburgh who serves as a vital link between the university and cooperating schools. Some university supervisors are program faculty members or adjunct instructors who are integrally involved in developing the program of studies and teaching candidates while they are on campus. Other supervisors are graduate students pursuing masters or doctoral degrees in education, and these individuals are generally certified and experienced teachers who work under the guidance of our full-time faculty. Many of the supervisors have also completed advanced graduate studies in teaching, teacher education, and staff development. In addition, all of them participate in regular clinical supervision training programs. Several members of our supervisory staff have even served as mentor teachers.

The university supervisor works closely with teaching candidates and their mentors. Recommended guidelines for supervisors are as follows:

- 35)** Interpret University policies, procedures, and requirements to all personnel involved in the clinical experience.
- 36)** Know the standards (criteria established by the program and by PDE) to be used in assessing candidates' teaching performance.
- 37)** Conduct the periodically scheduled evaluations of candidates – program midterm and final evaluations and the Pennsylvania Department of Education-430 (formative and summative).
- 38)** Observe candidates' teaching. Formal and informal data should be recorded on standard observation forms. To be most effective, this should be done on a regular basis throughout the year. If candidates are struggling, the university supervisor is to provide more support in and out of the classroom with observations, conferences, etc.
- 39)** Confer with candidates following each observation. Share the data with candidates and the mentor. This will assist candidates in evaluating teaching strengths and weaknesses in an on-going manner and developing goals.
- 40)** Vary the types of feedback provided to candidates. There are many options. Describe. Evaluate. Correct. Ask questions. Check for understanding. Mix and match feedback to fit candidates' level of development.

- 41) Plan specific areas that will receive attention in subsequent observations with candidates or mentor.
- 42) Conduct group seminars and allow candidates to exchange ideas, feelings, and perspectives with their peers.
- 43) Keep the Student Placement Coordinator and specialty area program faculty informed of candidates' progress at appropriate times. Immediate notification is required when problems begin to surface.
- 44) Write a letter of recommendation for candidate's university placement file.
- 45) Maintain confidentiality regarding candidates' progress and work with other faculty members at the field site.
- 46) If a candidate needs to be moved to a new site, the university supervisor will remain the same when possible. This will ensure continuity of supervision, feedback, and understanding of progress.

## **General Policies & Procedures**

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Several policies and procedures have been established to serve the best interests of candidates, the mentor, the school site/district, and the university supervisor. These guidelines are designed to enrich candidates teaching experience for all parties involved, including the children and youth who attend the schools where the practicum takes place. Many local school districts have additional standards to regulate the personal and professional conduct of candidates. If candidates are confused about whether to follow Pitt's guidelines or those of the local school, they should check with the mentor and university supervisor.

Please consult with the Student Placement Coordinator regarding individual issues or circumstances.

### **Attire and Appearance**

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Professional attire and appearance are always expected. Pitt does not require a standard uniform for candidates, but most cooperating schools have policies about dress and grooming. The instructor and building principal are the best sources of advice on these matters; do not simply assume by following the lead of others in the building. Business dress is most appropriate. Tattoos should be covered. Piercings other than in the ear should usually be removed if they are visible. Please distinguish yourself from your students by your attire.

### **Email Policies**

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In communicating by email with faculty, instructors, or professionals at the field site, it is essential that emails are courteous and show professionalism. Email messages should not suggest an informal relationship with a professor, parent, professional colleague, supervisor, mentor, etc., but rather should respect professional protocol in writing.

It is a professionalism expectation that all teacher education candidates will return university and site-based emails within 24 hours during the school week and within 48 hours on the weekend.

Email is never to be assumed to be an official correspondence. You may not convey absences to the school site via email but should phone the mentor teacher personally to discuss the nature of the absence. Also, remember that email is not confidential correspondence. When you write an email, remember that it may be saved, distributed, made public – with or without your knowledge.

## **Social Media**

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Teachers are often held to higher standards than the public; therefore, it is important for all teachers to be aware of their public internet presence. If a candidate maintains a public internet presence, any potentially offensive language or pictures should be removed. While candidates may not consider content offensive or questionable, consider that a potential administrator, colleague, parent, or student may be viewing and judging the content. Prior to entering a teacher education program, candidates should ensure their social media presence is set to private.

Teacher candidates are not to interact with students on social media, through personal email, cell phone calls, or text messages. All electronic communication should occur through district or university email, or district-approved social media accounts. Communication through the phone should be conducted on district telephones. No exceptions will be made, and removal from the program may result from breaching this policy.

Lastly, teacher candidates are not permitted to post any pictures of students, school activities, or identifiable student work on social media; nor can these be used as part of a portfolio for hiring purposes. Teacher candidates are not permitted to post about their student teaching or internship experience on social media. Students and school sites should not be identified publicly in any way.

## **Student Confidentiality & Contact**

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Teacher candidates are not permitted to interact with students outside of the clinical placement. Students should not have contact with students or families outside of official school communication carried out via district or Pitt email or the district phone service. Personal relationships between teacher candidates and students are prohibited.

Candidates are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all the students they work with in field placements related to coursework at the University of Pittsburgh. When writing or doing assignments for courses or speaking about field experiences and the students, use pseudonyms (not initials) for students', teachers', and schools' names. In public, it is your responsibility to keep written assignments and any other materials bearing the names of students, teachers, or staff secure from the view of others.

In addition, candidates are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of students within school sites. Only speak about students with other school personnel who are directly involved with that student. This may include your mentor teacher, school support staff, academic support teams, administration, etc. No teacher candidate should speak about students in shared spaces (teacher work room, lunchrooms, etc.) as confidentiality in shared spaces cannot be assumed.

No teacher candidate should speak about a student's IEP, 504 plan, work with a guidance counselor/social worker, immigration status, work with CYS, etc. in front of other students or school personnel. All teacher candidates should seek the guidance of their mentor teacher and supervisor regarding

student confidentiality and how best to support individual students to maintain confidentiality and provide the best support for all students.

## **Video/Audio Recordings**

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Teacher candidates must obtain permission to video/audiotape in their school site from both district personnel and the parent/guardian of each student who is being video or audiotaped.

A university-approved video/audio-recording form can be found in Appendix C. Signatures from all parents/guardians of students to be video or audio-recorded **MUST** be obtained prior to taping. No exceptions are to be made. Candidates must keep a copy of all parental/guardian permission. No video or audio recordings are to be posted online or distributed for any reason, including during a candidate's job search.

## **Strikes and Walkouts**

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In cases where mentors participate in strikes, walkouts, or other labor management activities that result in their absence from the classroom, candidates will notify the Student Placement Coordinator as soon as possible. Candidates will work off-site (at the university, at the library, or at home) preparing for their teaching assignment or university coursework until such problems have been resolved. In no instance will any candidate assume any responsibility or duty that the teachers at the site have decided to withhold services from—neither teaching nor extra-curricular in nature.

Should the school calendar be extended due to strike, the Student Placement Coordinator will negotiate with the district to ensure candidates will have a few days off during the holiday breaks. Candidates will not be expected to work after June 15.

## **Work & Family Obligations**

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Many candidates are balancing logistical (transportation, housing, etc.), financial (rent, tuition, cost of living, etc.), and personal or family obligations (childcare, personal or family member illness, etc.) that result in considerable stress during the academic year. Regardless of candidates' circumstances, the University of Pittsburgh and the cooperating schools expect full-time devotion to the teacher certification preparation process, including meeting our strict standards for professionalism at the school site and at the university. Our best advice is to not apply to a University of Pittsburgh teacher certification program or accept a clinical experience placement unless you are ready to manage your work and family affairs in such a way that they do not interfere with your obligations to your courses and clinical site. If it is determined that your work and/or personal obligations are interfering with your ability to meet program expectations, you will be removed from the program until the following year or such a time as you are able to demonstrate that you are better able to manage your competing responsibilities.

As part of maintaining professional boundaries, candidates are not permitted to invite guests (parents, significant others, etc.) to their school sites for visits, meetings, or school events without asking for and receiving permission from their mentor teachers at least 48 hours in advance. Guests must follow school district policy for guests regarding proper identification, behavior, and clearances. Additionally, candidates must complete FERPA waiver forms for any individual who is

invited to participate in meetings or discussions in which candidates' records or performance in their teacher certification program will be discussed.

## **Work Improvement Plans**

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Throughout teacher certification programs there are times when individual students require additional support with academic work, placement work and/or professionalism. It is the intention of each program to provide the support that is necessary in these cases. Whenever an issue of concern arises in university coursework and/or the placement site, the faculty member, mentor, or supervisor involved will reach out to the program coordinator to initiate a meeting between the student and all concerned parties and to request a Work Improvement Plan (see appendix A).

A Work Improvement Plan will be created for any student who experiences serious difficulties in a teacher certification program. The plan outlines the concerns, the supports that are being offered the student, and the consequences if an improvement is not made. Consequences can include failure of a course, removal from the placement site or removal from the program, among other things. The Work Improvement Plan is provided and explained to the student during a face-to-face meeting. During this meeting, the student can reflect upon the current situation, share their perspective, and express the need for particular supports. The student is permitted to supplement the Work Improvement Plan document with a written statement. After the meeting, key personnel (i.e. supervisors, mentors and/or faculty members) will be informed. The Work Improvement Plan requires signatures from all involved parties that indicate receipt of the plan. The plan will go into effect 3 days after the meeting if the plan remains unsigned by the student. The plan is filed in the student's folder. This plan will then serve as a guiding document as the student, with the support of program personnel, works to make necessary improvements. Work Improvement Plans can be modified as necessary.

## **Work Product**

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As a student in the School of Education, Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading, the work you produce may be used by the school's faculty for purposes of accreditation, research, or program evaluation. Names of students and identifying information are never used in evaluation and research studies. If you would not like your work to be used, you must inform the Student Placement Coordinator as soon as possible.

## **Field-Based Site Liaison**

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In addition to the basic triad, the clinical experience in each cooperating school district involves several key individuals who provide specialized support services throughout the year. One such person is the Field-Based Site Liaison. This person may be a district administrator, building principal, or a clinical resident teacher at one of the school sites. This contact person is most knowledgeable about district level procedures and can be an additional resource for assisting candidates and mentor in understanding the particular districts' history, relationship, and individual contract with candidates' programs and the University of Pittsburgh.

## **Responsibilities of Host School District**

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- 1) Provide an appropriate teaching assignment with a supportive, encouraging, skilled mentor teacher.
- 2) Invite candidates to participate in district-sponsored orientation programs prior to the start of school.
- 3) Provide an established and regular meeting time with the mentor each day.
- 4) Phase candidates into teaching duties in a gradual and realistic manner, following the suggestions of the University supervisor, the mentor teacher, and the Program guidelines.
- 5) Recognize candidates is in the district/building to learn to become an educator and to support the fact that their primary responsibility and focus is to develop their skills in planning and implementing instruction.
- 6) Provide a workspace for candidates.
- 7) Provide needed resources and support in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education for candidates to be successful and effective.
- 8) Permit candidates to record several classes for personal reflection.
- 9) Participate in shaping Pitt's programming by offering your feedback related to the school climate, the clinical experience, and the preparation of our candidates.
- 10) Participate in candidate interview processes, if possible, during the spring and summer, to ensure a good fit with your prospective mentee.
- 11) Communicate with the University of Pittsburgh to facilitate the clinical experience and to ensure the needs of candidates and the needs of the district's students are being met. Confer as needed concerning progress.
- 12) Acknowledge candidates as a professional colleague who is on staff to serve the students while learning and honing their skills as an educator.

## **Student Placement Coordinator & University Support**

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Another key person is the Student Placement Coordinator, who functions as a liaison between the university and school district. The Student Placement Coordinator and the Field Based Site Liaison at each district work closely together to maintain continuity among the various dimensions of the clinical experience. The Student Placement Coordinator performs the following tasks:

- Coordinates the placement of candidates.
- Plans and conducts field and employment related seminars for candidates.
- Available to assist districts in developing or conducting seminars with the district's orientation, induction, and staff development.
- Facilitates communication between university faculty who teach theory/methods courses and candidates and mentors.
- Oversees university faculty, employees, and GSAs who provide on-site clinical supervision for candidates.

- Helps candidates with procedural matters (e.g., registration, graduation, certification, placement, etc.).
- Participates in continuous evaluation of the clinical experience practicum.
- Negotiates contractual and placement agreements with cooperating school districts.

The Admissions and Enrollment Services Office assists students with pre-admission counseling, admissions process, financial aid, and graduation applications. It is under the direction of the Dean of the School of Education. The Chairperson of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading and the Associate Chairperson are responsible for the overall administration and governance of all the teacher preparation programs in the School of Education.

Each program is coordinated by a Program Coordinator who is a faculty member that oversees that coursework, instruction, and graduate students within that area of study. Currently, at the University of Pittsburgh the following individuals fill these positions:

Program	Coordinator	Email
CASE Special Education & Primary Plus	Amy Srsic	<a href="mailto:asrsic@pitt.edu">asrsic@pitt.edu</a>
MOSAIC, MSW/CAST, & MED Special Education	Sheila Conway	<a href="mailto:sjconway@pitt.edu">sjconway@pitt.edu</a>
English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science & Foreign Language Education (MAT/PY)	Emily Rainey	<a href="mailto:emily.rainey@pitt.edu">emily.rainey@pitt.edu</a>
World & Heritage Education (MAT/PY)	Heather Hendry	<a href="mailto:heh15@pitt.edu">heh15@pitt.edu</a>
Reading Education	Michelle Sobolak	<a href="mailto:mjsobolak@pitt.edu">mjsobolak@pitt.edu</a>
CASE Elementary Education	Anna Arlotta-Guerrero	<a href="mailto:ana28@pitt.edu">ana28@pitt.edu</a>
Vision Studies	Frances Mary D'Andrea	<a href="mailto:fmd22@pitt.edu">fmd22@pitt.edu</a>

## Intern Certification for MAT Students

According to the PA Department of Education, an Intern Teaching Certificate is a valid professional certificate that entitles the holder to fill a professional teaching position in the designated endorsement area stated on the certificate. It is issued for a period not exceeding three (3) calendar years and may not be renewed. The validity of the Intern Certificate is contingent upon the holder rendering satisfactory service to the assigned school district, thus maintaining continuous enrollment and making satisfactory progress in an approved teacher candidate program leading to an Instructional I Certificate. A candidate working under an Intern Certificate is considered "highly qualified" by the state of Pennsylvania.

In Pitt's MAT program, all teacher candidates obtain the Intern Teaching Certificate by the end of the fall term (December). The certificate enables MATs to assume more classroom responsibility in the field site for the remainder of the academic year.

To obtain the Intern Teaching Certificate, MAT's must:

- Earn a minimum of S in the fall internship.

- Achieve a passing Praxis II score.
- Complete an online application using TIMS (PDE’s Teacher Information Management System). The Records Manager and Student Placement Coordinator will hold TIMS information sessions during the fall term. MAT’s will be notified of these sessions via email.
- Submit payment through TIMS for the fee associated with application and processing of candidates Teaching Certificate.
- Upload the TIMS “Cover Sheet” to TaskStream.
- If the student has a criminal record, additional documentation may need to be submitted to PDE, who will determine if candidates is eligible for certification.

An Intern Certificate may be revoked in the following circumstances:

- If a candidate receives an unsatisfactory rating by either the school district or institution of higher education.
- If a candidate is not continuously enrolled in a teacher candidate certificate program.
- If a candidate is dismissed for cause and/or conviction of a crime.

## **Substitute Teaching**

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Teaching candidates who satisfy existing PA requirements outlined in the PA School Code section 1201.1(1) and who have received at least one satisfactory observation from their program are eligible to act as substitute teachers during the clinical placement experience within the guidelines outlined below:

### **GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS**

- No teaching candidate is required to apply to substitute teach during their student teaching placement experience. Student teachers/interns will always have the right to accept or deny substitute teaching placements on any given day.
- Student teachers/interns are not permitted to substitute teach during their PDE required two-week takeover or on days when they have a scheduled university observation.
- Students in pre-student teaching (CASE seniors and Primary Plus fall term) are not permitted to substitute teach during their placement hours.

### **TEACHING CANDIDATE & DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Any student teacher who wants to be considered for substitute teaching must complete the district-required paperwork and follow all policies outlined by the district to be approved as a substitute teacher.
- Student teachers/interns may not substitute until they have been in their placement sites for a minimum of one month and until they have earned one successful program evaluation.

- Student teachers must notify their university supervisor and program coordinator of their desire to substitute and receive approval prior to seeking the locally issued substitute teacher permit.
- Any school district who wishes to use a student teacher as a substitute teacher should establish a process for providing the locally issued permit, as described in the legislation, to the student teacher and this should be articulated to the student teacher.
- School districts are not required to use student teachers as substitute teachers even if a locally issued permit is approved.
- School districts are expected to follow the University of Pittsburgh Act 91 Substitute Teaching Policy when utilizing any University of Pittsburgh teacher education candidate.
- School district will compensate the student teacher/intern for substitute teaching following district policies.

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#### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AND SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- University supervisors will observe the student teacher/intern on a schedule determined collaboratively by the mentor teacher and student teacher/intern.
- The University of Pittsburgh Student Placement Coordinator, Elisabeth Estes ([elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu](mailto:elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu)), will work in collaboration with district student teacher liaisons regarding approval for student teachers/interns to begin substitute teaching and for approval for sustained substitute teaching experiences as outlined below.

When all parties agree to student teacher/intern substitute teaching and locally issued substitute teacher permits are obtained, the following guidelines will be followed.

- In the mentor teacher's classroom:
  - Student teachers/interns are permitted to substitute teach one day per week for their mentor teacher.
  - Student teachers/interns can only substitute for a total of 10 days per year. If students are in two placements across the academic year, they may substitute 5 total days in their fall placement and 5 total days in their spring placement. If student teachers are only in a one term placement, they may substitute teach for a total of 5 days during the semester placement.
  - If a district is requesting that a student teacher/intern substitute more than one day per week for their mentor teacher, permission must be requested through the Clinical Placement Coordinator, Elisabeth Estes ([elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu](mailto:elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu)).
- In the same building:
  - Student teachers/interns may be asked to substitute in the same building they are placed with preference given for substitute teaching in the same content area in emergency situations only.
  - If a student teacher/intern is asked to substitute in the same building but outside their mentor teacher's classroom for more than one day, permission must be requested

through the Student Placement Coordinator, Elisabeth Estes ([elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu](mailto:elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu)).

- In other district buildings:
  - Student teachers/interns are not permitted to substitute in buildings other than where they are placed for their student teaching/internship.

## ENTERING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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During the last semester of the program, candidates must apply for graduation, certification, and/or employment. The information provided in this section of the handbook should help to minimize the problems sometimes associated with leaving the University of Pittsburgh and becoming a fully certified professional teacher.

### Graduation

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Application for degrees can be filed in the Dean's office at the time of registration for the term during which the student expects to complete requirements for graduation, but no later than ten calendar days after the beginning of that term. Graduation occurs three times each year (December, April, and August); however, convocation is once a year, usually in late April. It is the student's responsibility to obtain, complete, and submit the application for graduation before the deadline. Teacher Education candidates are invited to participate in the graduation ceremony in April, although depending on their program some will officially graduate in June.

### Certification

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Applications for a Pennsylvania Instructional I Certificate must be submitted near the end of the term in which the student expects to graduate or complete certification study.

This application must be completed through the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS).

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## INSTRUCTIONAL I CERTIFICATE

The Instructional I Certificate (*provisional certificate*) is issued to persons whose primary responsibility is teaching. It is valid for six (6) years in the field for which it was endorsed. The six-year time limit begins when the teacher secures his/her first contracted position and applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Possess a baccalaureate degree
- Successfully complete a PDE-approved teacher education program
- Pass the appropriate certification test(s) (Praxis II, PECT, etc.)
- Receive the recommendation of a college or university

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## INSTRUCTIONAL II CERTIFICATE

The Instructional II Certificate (*permanent certificate*) is issued to persons who have completed:

- PDE-approved induction program for beginning teachers
- Three years of satisfactory teaching in an approved school
- Twenty-four (24) credit hours of collegiate study or PDE approved in-service courses.

College credit acceptable for renewal of the Instructional I Certificate or conversion to the Instructional II Certificate must be earned at a PDE-approved baccalaureate degree granting institution, after the conferring of the Baccalaureate degree. Students who complete a University of Pittsburgh School of Education graduate level teacher certification program have earned the 24-credits required.

### **Letter of Verification**

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A time lag of at least 4-6 weeks usually occurs between completion of program requirements and the issuance of the Instructional I Certificate from Pennsylvania Department of Education or the diploma from the University of Pittsburgh. During this period, most students are interviewing for teaching positions and employers will request verification of completion of degree/certification requirements. Once the student's application for graduation and/or certification is endorsed, the Office of the Dean of the School of Education may, upon request, provide an official letter of verification that can be shared with prospective employers.

To request a verification letter, students may reach out to their program coordinator.

### **Extended Plan of Studies**

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Initial certification programs (MAT, MOSAIC, SETP, Primary Plus, Vision, CASE graduate year, PY) at the University of Pittsburgh are intensive one-year programs in which coursework and placement hours are intended to be completed simultaneously and during consecutive semesters. However, in very rare circumstances, a longer plan of studies may be considered. Consideration will be on an individual basis and will consider situations outside of candidates' control. An extended plan of studies is not guaranteed, regardless of a candidate's circumstances. All plans of study require continuous enrollment. Any change to the program plan of studies requires pre-approval by the student's Program Coordinator, Director of Teacher Education, and the Associate Dean of the School of Education and is contingent on the availability of compatible field site placements.

## Appendix A

### University of Pittsburgh School of Education | Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading

#### Teaching Candidate Improvement Plan

Work Plan: An agreement between the student, program coordinator, director of teacher coordination, and/or appropriate faculty, supervisor(s), and mentors. This agreement is a formal document that describes expectations and requirements for the successful completion of a program when the student is failing to meet program requirements.

<b>Effective Date of Work Plan:</b>  <i>The date when the Work Plan takes effect (the first day of the WORK PLAN must be adhered to)</i>	
<b>Full Name of Student/Teacher Candidate:</b>  <i>Full name of the student teacher/teacher candidate as it appears in University of Pittsburgh records (no nicknames, shortened names, etc.). Include full middle name when possible.</i>	
<b>Student's Pitt Email Address:</b>	
<b>Student's Other Email:</b>	
<b>Student Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Person filling out this form:</b>	

#### Program

<b>Program Name:</b>	
<b>Program Coordinator:</b>	
<b>Program Coordinator Pitt Email Address:</b>	
<b>Program Coordinator Office Phone No.:</b>	

<b>Program Coordinator Cell Phone No.:</b>	
<b>Field Supervisor:</b>	
<b>Field Supervisor Email Address:</b>	
<b>Field Supervisor Phone Number:</b>	

**Placement**

<b>Placement Institution:</b> <i>Please provide full name of institution and complete street address.</i>	
<b>Division or Department:</b> <i>If applicable.</i>	
<b>Placement Description:</b> <i>Please provide relevant data such as subject being taught, schedule, grade level, class size, etc.</i>	
<b>Mentor Teacher:</b>	
<b>Mentor Title:</b>	
<b>Mentor Email Address:</b>	
<b>Mentor Phone Number:</b>	

## Assessment

**Explanation of Areas that Need Improvement:**

*Describe the areas where the student teacher is failing to meet program expectations.*

**Record of Meetings:**

*Please indicate dates, locations, times, attendees, and agenda items for each meeting that took place with the student to discuss failure to meet requirements. How many times has the mentor teacher or field supervisor met with student to discuss this/these issues?*

**Expectations and Requirements:**

**Expectations and Requirements**

**Expectations and Requirements:**

**Expectations and Requirements:**

**Follow-up Plan:**

*Include date(s), method of communication (meeting, phone, email), and person(s) who will implement follow-up with the student teacher:*

**Consequences:**

Signature of Student:

Signature of Program Coordinator:

Signature of Director of Student Teaching:

Signature of Field Supervisor:	
Signature of Mentor Teacher:	
Other Signatures Required:	

### Instructions on Applying for Clearances Teacher Education Programs Academic Year 2022-2023

In order to participate in an internship where you will interact with minors as part of the requirements for your program in the School of Education, you must submit all of the required clearances, outlined below, to the [School of Education Clearance Portal](#).

By law, you are **not** permitted to go into a K-12 facility or interact with minors for purposes of your academic program until these clearances are uploaded AND approved in the Clearance Portal.

In addition to uploading electronic copies of your clearances, you must keep copies of your **PA Child Abuse**, **PA Criminal**, and **FBI** (or UEID number) clearances to take into the field for most placements. The School of Education cannot share these with placement sites on your behalf, so be sure to follow the directions for saving your clearances as you apply for them.

Upload documents to the portal as you receive them rather than waiting until you have obtained all the required documents.

Please contact Elisabeth Estes ([elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu](mailto:elisabeth.estes@pitt.edu)) if you have any questions about obtaining and submitting your clearances.

*\*Please note that you will need to log into your Pitt account to access the clearance portal.*

#### Required Clearances:

##### 1. PA Criminal Record Check (Act 34)

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**
- Website: <http://epatch.state.pa.us>
- Fee: \$22
- Other Notes
  - Clearance should be for employment purposes (NOT volunteer)
  - Print clearance immediately and save electronically for future use.

##### 2. PA Child Abuse (Act 33/151)

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**
- Website: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS>
- Fee: \$13
- Other Notes:

- Creating an account and submitting your clearance application online will give you immediate access to your results (or the status of your results if your results cannot be processed immediately).
- Obtain the clearance for employment purposes (“*Individual 14 years of age or older who is applying for or holding a paid position as an employee with a program, activity or service, as a person responsible for the child’s welfare or having direct contact with children as the purpose*”), NOT volunteer purposes.

### 3. FBI Federal Criminal History Record

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**
- Website: <https://uenroll.identogo.com>
- Fee: \$23.85
- Other Notes:
  - Use the Service Code **1KG6RT** to register for Pennsylvania PDE-Colleges/Universities Teacher Education Program. *Please note that if this code and version are not used, the clearance will not be valid.*
  - You will be prompted to register as well as make an appointment for your fingerprinting services.
  - Take online registration receipt and a photo ID to a convenient location.
  - All applicants will receive an unofficial copy of their report via email (Please note the link is available only for **one-time access** only, and **once accessed will no longer be valid**. You should only access this link from a device that will allow you to download, print, or save your results at that time).
- Enter only your UEID number into the [clearance portal](#).

### 4. Tuberculin Test

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021**
- Fee: Varies
- Other Notes
  - TB Test results are generally valid for two years. Occasionally, a site may need more recent results. You will be contacted directly if this is the case for you.
  - The test can be either a skin prick, blood test, or chest x-ray (if needed.)
  - Only upload a test with a negative result.
  - Some possible options for obtaining a test are through your primary care provider, most urgent cares, the Allegheny Health Department, or Pitt’s Student Health office.

### 5. Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**
- Website: [Click here to access the form](#).
- Fee: none
- Other Notes:
  - You will need to print, sign and then scan the form to an electronic format.
  - Do **not type** a signature into this form.
  - You can use a smartphone app (such as [GeniusScan](#)) to scan the form into an electronic format.

## 6. Allegheny County Mandated Reporter Law

- Valid Dates: No earlier than **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**
- Website: (see link in form on last page of this document)
- Please read the online law and then sign the form on the last page of this document.
- Fee: none
- Other Notes:
  - You will need to print, sign and then scan the form to an electronic format.
  - Do **not type** a signature into this form.
  - You can use a smartphone app (such as [GeniusScan](#)) to scan the form into an electronic format.

## 7. Pitt Online Protecting Children from Abuse Online Course

- Valid Dates: Any (only needs to be completed once)
- Website: [Complete the training here](#). The course may take up to 3 hours to complete.
- Fee: none
- Other Notes:
  - Save a copy of the certification of completion immediately after completing the training course.
  - (If you already completed this course, you will **not** need to do it again. However, you will need to upload the certificate from the time that the course was completed).

## Mandated Reporter Form

As part of the clearance process, you are required to read the following website regarding the law and the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect:

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/mandated-reporter.aspx>

The information provides details on the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect and identifies those who are mandated by law to report it.

To acknowledge receipt of these procedures and to confirm you have read the information on the website, please print out this form, sign, and upload to the clearance portal.

(X) This is to confirm that I accessed the above website and have read the Department of Human Services of Allegheny County's regulations governing the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

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### Student Video/Audio Release Form

**Dear [Parent/Guardian],**

I have enrolled this school year in a program at the University of Pittsburgh to enhance my skills as an educator. My coursework requires that short video and/or audio recordings of lessons taught in your child's class be submitted. Although the video/audio recordings involve both the teacher and various students, the primary focus is on the teacher's instruction, not on the students in the class. In the course of recording, your child may appear/be heard on the recording.

Also, at times during the year, I may be asked to submit samples of student work as evidence of teaching practice, and that work may include some of your child's work. No student's name will appear on any materials that are submitted.

The University of Pittsburgh may use and distribute my video/audio recording(s), my comments, and my classroom materials for assessment, professional development, and accreditation purposes. So, for example, the recordings might be discussed in a class for future teachers, and accrediting agencies might check to see that we have such discussions, but the recording will not be displayed on a website or otherwise distributed to the general public. The form below will be used to document your permission for these activities and limited uses.

Sincerely,

Video Recording and Student Work Permission Slip

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named above. I have received and read your letter regarding the program of study in which you participating at the University of Pittsburgh, and agree to the following** (please mark below in the box that corresponds):

**I DO give permission** to you to include my child's image on video and/or audio recording as he or she participates in a class and/or to reproduce materials that my child may produce as part of classroom activities. No last names will appear on any materials submitted by the teacher.

**I DO NOT give permission** to video or audio-record my child or to reproduce materials that my child may produce as part of classroom activities.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Parent or Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_