



Student Teaching Handbook

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Table of Contents

| Section | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Letter from Special Education Student Teaching Coordinator | 2 |
| Student Teaching Overview | 3 |
| <i>Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling Vision & Mission Statement</i> | |
| <i>Student Teaching Overview</i> | |
| <i>Purpose</i> | |
| Student Teacher Placement | 4 |
| <i>Placement Process</i> | |
| <i>Distant Placement</i> | |
| <i>Out-of-State Placement</i> | |
| <i>International Student Teaching Program</i> | |
| Student Teacher Responsibilities | 5 |
| <i>Before Student Teaching</i> | |
| <i>During Student Teaching</i> | |
| <i>Professional Expectations for Students</i> | |
| <i>Absences</i> | |
| <i>Substituting (Student Teachers Only)</i> | |
| <i>Commitment to Pupils</i> | |
| <i>Commitment to the Mentor Teacher</i> | |
| Mentor Teacher Information | 8 |
| University Supervisor Information | 10 |
| District Mentor Information | 11 |
| Evaluation of Student Teaching | 11-12 |
| <i>Overview</i> | |
| <i>Formative Evaluation</i> | |
| <i>Summative Evaluation</i> | |
| <i>Scoring</i> | |
| Support for Student Teachers | 12 |
| Students at Risk | 12 |
| Early Termination of Student Teacher | 13 |
| Assumption of Risk | 13 |

Dear Students and Colleagues,

Welcome!

Student Teaching is a transformative experience. During the student teaching semester, students have the opportunity to practice what they have learned during coursework and deepen their learning through the mentorship of master teachers and support of university supervisors.

This Student Teaching Handbook is designed to provide guidance and direction for

- Student Teachers,
- Associate Teachers,
- Mentor Teachers,
- University Supervisors,
- District Coaches,
- and School Administrators.

This handbook includes information about program goals, requirements for student teachers, and instructions for mentor teachers, district mentors and university supervisors. I hope that you will refer to it frequently.

If I can be of assistance at any time, please contact me julia.lyman@usu.edu or 435-797-7205.

Sincerely,



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Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling Vision and Mission Statements

Vision: Through high quality professional preparation, research, advocacy, and innovative programming, we will lead in building inclusive communities and environments where equal opportunity and the equitable distribution of resources for people with disabilities and their families is the norm, not the exception.

Mission: People with disabilities make meaningful contributions to our communities and to society. However, we recognize that people with disabilities and their families are historically ignored, marginalized and excluded. Therefore, our mission is to prepare high quality professionals; identify, implement, and disseminate evidence-based practices; and conduct research and outreach in collaboration with community partners. Our work is critical to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities across educational, independent living, and employment domains.

The core values that drive our mission include the conviction that all people have the right to:

- Respect: valued interactions and communication
- Wellness: positive relationships and meaningful partnerships
- Inclusion: meaningful participation in education, employment, and community
- Self-determination: opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and strengths to support self-advocacy and informed choices.

Student Teaching Overview

Student teaching is the capstone experience of the Utah State University teacher education program and provides an opportunity for students to continue academic and professional growth. More importantly, the student teaching semester is a crucial step in induction to the teaching profession.

Student teaching is a full-time, 15-week teaching experience. Initially, student teachers will observe the mentor teacher and assume partial responsibility for student learning. It is recommended that students have the opportunity to observe lessons being taught in each area of the curriculum before teaching that topic independently,

The transfer of teaching should be scheduled so the student is in complete charge of the classroom within two weeks of the first day of the placement. If a student demonstrates the competence and initiative necessary to take charge earlier, he/she should be encouraged to do so.

Purpose

The purpose of student teaching is to provide opportunities to develop and evaluate the major areas of teacher practice. Student teaching requires the constant pursuit of productive curriculum plans, effective teaching strategies, effective behavior management strategies, proper collection of data, appropriate use of assessment and strategic data-based decision making to provide quality learning for all students. The experience includes formative and

summative evaluation of the student teacher's competence in a school setting and is intended to facilitate taking theory into practice.

Student Teaching Placement

Student teachers are placed with the goal of providing them with the best possible learning environment. Student teaching must occur in a classroom where there is a teacher certified in the same emphasis area who serves as a mentor teacher. *Under no circumstances should a student teacher arrange his/her own assignment with a particular teacher or school.* There are several factors considered when determining a student's placement:

- **Student's Request**
The level, and school the student teacher requests on his/her application form is given sincere consideration. You may not student teach in a school you attended or in a school where your siblings, children or relatives attend or work. Logan Main Campus students may not student teach in the same placement as practica placements.
- **Mentor Teachers**
Mentor teachers must have at least three (3) years of full-time teaching experience.
- **Demands of the Public Schools**
The district's and individual school's needs determine final placements. Administration can accept or reject student teaching placement requests based on circumstances.

The final decision for placement of a student teacher is the responsibility of the Special Education Student Teaching Coordinator at USU. The coordinator will consider a variety of factors, including those outlined above, to create an opportunity for success in student teaching.

Student Teaching Outside Utah

Student Teaching outside the state of Utah is not allowed. IDEA is interpreted differently state by state. We need to insure that the student has experience with Utah's interpretation of IDEA requirements to recommend a student for a teaching license.

International Student Teaching Placement

Because IDEA is a federal law (United States) and special education services vary so widely in other countries, USU Special Education does not offer international student teaching placements.

Student Teacher Responsibilities

Before Student Teaching

- Submit a complete student teaching application to the SPED Student Teaching Office. Instructions and deadlines for the application can be found [here](#).
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average and grades required for your teaching program.
- Maintain a current Utah Educator's Background Check.
- Pass the Utah Educator Standards Review
- Become familiar with the Utah General Teacher Preparation Competencies found [here](#).
- Enroll in the Student Teaching Course required by your major
- Contact assigned mentor teacher(s) and school administrator

During Student Teaching

- Attend Student Teacher Orientation.
- Participate in a Triad/Dyad Conference with mentor teacher(s) and university supervisor/district mentor during the first week of student teaching.
- Send home introductory letter to parents within two weeks of the first day of student teaching.
- Conference with mentor teacher(s) and university supervisor/district mentor regularly regarding progress.
- Complete all other assignments required in the student teaching coursework.
- Apply for Graduation.
- Apply for the Professional Teaching License.

Professional Expectations for Student Teachers

- Practice high moral and ethical behavior.
- Act and dress appropriately.
- Understand and adhere to the legal and ethical responsibilities of a teacher in the classroom.
- Work the same contract hours as the mentor teachers. *Additional time outside of contract hours is necessary to fulfill your teaching duties.*
- Arrive on time daily.
- Make yourself available for frequent conferences with your mentor teacher(s) and university supervisor/district mentor.
- Participate in school meetings, trainings, and activities.
- Follow the public-school calendar for holidays and school breaks. *Student teachers will not take the USU breaks outlined on the USU calendar.*
- Follow the USU SPED Professional Behavior Guidelines.
- Focus on teaching the students. Your main concern should be on pupil achievement rather than making a favorable impression on the mentor teacher or university supervisor.
- Focus on continual improvement. Continually reflect on and evaluate each teaching experience – determining what went well, what needs to be improved, and how you can be more effective next time. Stay aware of the extreme importance of your work. Do not demand perfection from yourself; demand continual improvement.

- Focus on the things you can control.
- Student teachers are cautioned not to overload themselves with additional university courses, or other responsibilities such as work during the student teaching experience. The amount of work you undertake during your student teaching experience has a direct relationship on your effectiveness as a teacher. Teaching is a responsibility that must come first. The obligation to the education of school pupils cannot be taken lightly: therefore, responsibilities other than teaching should be kept minimal.

Absences

- Student Teachers are permitted three (3) absences during the student teaching experience for extenuating circumstances (such as personal illness or a death in the immediate family).
- Student teachers do not have personal leave days.
- Student teachers must notify their mentor teacher(s) and university supervisor as soon as possible *before* the absence.
- All non-school related appointments or commitments must be scheduled outside of contract time.
- In extreme circumstances a student may need additional time away from their student teaching duties. Additional time off must be approved by Student Teaching Coordinator in advance and made up by adding additional days beyond the normal end date of student teaching.

Substituting (Student Teachers Only)

- Student teachers are only allowed to substitute in an emergency in their assigned classroom(s) if given consent from the university supervisor, mentor teacher(s), and the principal.
- A student teacher may work as a paid substitute in their assigned school for no more than three (3) consecutive days and no more than five (5) five days total.
- If the student teacher is not substituting and their regular classroom teacher is absent, a substitute is required to be in the classroom with the student teacher.

Commitment to Pupils

- Keep all information about pupils confidential.
- Focus on student learning.
- Maintain dignity to gain respect from pupils.
- Exhibit an empathetic and courteous attitude toward all pupils.
- Employ disciplinary measures that conform to the instructions of the mentor teacher(s).
- Treat the class as if it were your own.
- Be mindful of each pupil as an individual with special abilities, interests, and capacities for learning.
- Remain impartial in working with pupils and strive to be fair in judging their actions.
- Show respect toward all groups and individuals.

Commitment to the Mentor Teacher(s).

- Mentor teachers are legally responsible for classes.
- Be loyal to your mentor teacher(s).
- Do not be judgmental of the teaching style(s) of your mentor teacher(s).
- Do not say anything negative regarding your mentor teacher(s) to students or other faculty and staff members.
- Be respectful of knowledge and experience of your mentor teacher(s).
- Accept the decisions of your mentor teacher(s) regarding curriculum and instruction.
- Strive to meet the expectations of the mentor teacher(s).
- Be open to suggestions from the mentor teacher(s).
- Be willing to assume teaching responsibility.
- Preview lesson plans with your mentor teacher(s) to receive positive feedback and correction.
- Give credit and appreciation to the mentor teacher(s) for assistance they have given you.

Mentor Teachers

The mentor teacher facilitates the professional experiences of the student teacher and is an integral part of the student teaching experience.

Mentor teachers are provided a small honorarium at the end of the student teaching semester.

Responsibilities

- Prepare the pupils for the arrival of the student teacher. The pupils should be prepared to regard the student teacher as another teacher in the room, and to welcome additional teacher as a person who can make a positive contribution to their learning.
- Place a table or desk in the room for use by the student teacher. Preferably, this will not be a child's desk. Provide relevant experiences for USU students that may include, but are not limited to: observation, classroom activities, teacher responsibilities (all duties), parent/teacher conferences, IEP conferences, and professional meetings.
- Gather together materials that will help the student teacher understand curriculum and school policies (e.g., teachers' editions of textbooks, school, district and state curriculum guides, school handbook containing policies and procedures, safe school policies, etc.).
- Clear a time for a conference with the student teacher during the first day. Items to be discussed should include:
 - An explanation of expectations for the student teacher
 - A description of the instructional programs
 - Teaching schedule
 - Curricular objectives for each group or individual
 - Specific instructional methods
 - A description of behavior management procedures
 - Overall positive management plan
 - Specific sequence of steps to be used to manage specific behaviors
 - Individualized management plans for specific students (if any)
- Evaluate whether the student teacher demonstrates adequate knowledge of the content being taught, and assess the student teacher's communication, management, planning, presentation, and assessment skills.
- Observe and critique the student teacher's performance on a frequent and continual basis.
- Support the student teacher in gradually assuming teaching responsibility. The student teacher should assume your total teaching load by the end of the second week of the semester.
- Participate in the Triad Conference. A triad conference will be held during the first week of the student teaching placement. The student teacher, mentor teacher and university supervisor will participate. This conference is to set up expectations for the placement and go over a timeline for the Student Teaching requirements.
- Model best practices for Instruction, management, and organization. You have been selected to be a mentor teacher because you model "best practices." Remember that your classroom will be one of the models that your student teacher will have when s/he

begins teaching. Take every possible opportunity to demonstrate effective practices for your student teacher and describe to him/her what you are doing and why.

- Model professionalism. Professionalism is a subtle and complex concept. Students acquire professionalism from examples more than from description. You will be an important model of how a special education teacher should act as a professional.
- Encourage the student teacher to collaborate with you in making decisions that lead to the development of independence of his/her own teaching strategies.
- Prior to offering advice, encourage the student teacher to reflect about his/her planning, classroom practices, and decision-making.
- Encourage your student teacher to participate in as many IEPs, eligibility meetings, parent-teacher conferences and data reporting activities as possible.
- Complete the Mentor Teacher Checklist for every University Supervisor evaluation. A link will be provided to you by the student teacher to complete this digitally.
- Complete the Interim and Final Mentor Teacher Evaluation Forms.
- If you ever have doubts about the student teacher's ability to pass, consult with the University Supervisor/District Coach or Student Teaching Coordinator immediately. Remember to document concerns.

University Supervisors

The primary role of the university supervisor is to serve as a liaison between the university and the school and to serve as an additional mentor and support to the student teacher during the student teaching experience.

University supervisors are given a small honorarium at the end of the semester and will be reimbursed mileage according to USU policies and procedures.

Responsibilities

- Communicate expectations and supervisory practices to the Mentor Teacher, the Student Teacher, and to the School Principal. This should be done at the Triad Conference which is held the first week of the student teaching experience.
- Observe the student teacher 3-5 times during the semester using online forms. To receive a “pass” grade a student teacher must achieve 80% on last two observations. If student teacher achieves 80% or higher on observation 2 and observation 3, observation 4-5 are not needed
- If student teacher is dual major (for example mild/moderate and severe), they will receive 2-3 observations per setting. If student teacher achieves 80% or higher on 2nd observation in either block, a 3rd observation is not needed
- Provide timely, specific oral and written feedback to the student teacher regarding his/her instructional, management, organizational, and professional behavior. Emphasis areas have specific observation instruments to provide consistent feedback to student teachers.
- Observe each student teacher and provide constructive criticism and positive feedback.
- Advise and coach student teachers when necessary.
- Confer with the mentor teacher regarding the student teacher’s progress.
- Consult with the student teacher regarding the student teaching assignments.
- Grade student teaching assignments.
- Complete the Final University Supervisor Evaluation Forms.
- Assign a grade (Pass/Fail).
- If you ever have doubts about the student teacher’s ability to pass, consult with the Student Teaching Coordinator immediately. Remember to document concerns.

District Mentors (Coach)

The primary role of the district mentor is to support the OPTT Student Teacher during the student teaching experience.

Responsibilities

- Communicate expectations and supervisory practices to the Student Teacher, and to the School Principal. This should be done at the Dyad Conference which is held the first week of the student teaching experience.
- Observe the student teacher 3-5 times during the semester using online forms. To receive a “pass” grade a student teacher must achieve 80% on last two observations. If a student teacher achieves 80% or higher on observation 2 and observation 3, observation 4-5 are not needed.
- Provide timely, specific oral and written feedback to the student on professional behavior. Emphasis areas have specific observation instruments to provide consistent feedback to student teachers.
- Observe each student teacher and provide constructive criticism and positive feedback.
- Advise and coach student teachers when necessary.
- Confer with the Student Teaching Coordinator regarding the student teacher’s progress.
- Consult with the student teacher regarding the student teaching assignments.
- Grade student teaching assignments.
- Complete the Final District Mentor (University Supervisor) Evaluation Form.
- Assign a grade (Pass/Fail).
- If you ever have doubts about the student teacher’s ability to pass, consult with the Student Teaching Coordinator immediately. Remember to document concerns.

Evaluation Process

Overview

The student teacher requires observation and feedback of the classroom experience. This necessitates the involvement of the student, mentor teacher, and university supervisor/district mentor in an ongoing process of evaluation. Mentor teachers and university supervisors/district mentors should be open and honest in providing timely feedback to the student. Classroom teaching observations are designed to assist in the growth and development of a student. Student will be observed a minimum of three times by the university supervisor/district mentor. A post-observation conference should be held at the end of each observation.

Formative Evaluation

Mentor teachers and university supervisors/district mentors routinely observe and provide informal feedback to students throughout the student teaching semester. Documentation of observations and feedback is also required. The number of formative observations required of the mentor teacher and university supervisor is outlined in previous sections of the handbook.

Summative Evaluation

Near the end of the student teaching experience, the university supervisor/district mentor and mentor teacher should each complete a summative evaluation that aligns with the USBE General Teacher Education Competencies and review the results with the student. The summative evaluation is a required document for graduation and licensure. In addition to the grading rubric, the university supervisor/district mentor and mentor teacher provide written comments at the end of the evaluation which can serve as a letter of recommendation.

Scoring

When used as a summative assessment at the end of the student teaching, the expected (i.e., required) level of performance is two (2) or “demonstrates competency at expected level.” In addition, when used as a summative assessment, teacher candidates/student teachers are not expected to score a three (3) on any rows of the rubric; however, teacher candidates/student teachers are not succeeding if they score a zero (0) or one (1) on any row of the rubric. Thus, to succeed, the total score must be 70 or higher (minimum of 2 on each item).

Support for Students

One important skill students begin to develop during the student teaching semester is the ability to navigate and contribute to school culture and develop positive, professional relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Students may find that they are unsure of how to handle particular situations, have concerns about their placement or questions about student teaching responsibilities, or encounter a special circumstance that must be addressed. In these situations, student teachers should first discuss their concerns with their university supervisor/district mentor and/or their mentor teacher(s). Supervisors and mentors may support you by:

- Identifying resources within the school.
- Facilitating communication with a colleague or principal.
- Providing insight or suggestions for navigating situations and relationships.

- Making necessary accommodations.

Students at Risk of Failure

On occasion, students may have insufficient instructional or classroom management skills, or lack the professional attributes or behaviors necessary for professional educators. When this occurs the mentor teacher(s), university supervisor/district mentor, and coordinator must decide whether a student teacher should continue in or pass the student teaching experience. The procedures outlined in the *Students at Risk of Failure* policy are designed to help the student teacher, mentor teacher(s), and university personnel in this process. This policy can be found on the [SPER website](#).

Early Termination of Student Teachers

Placement and/or participation in the student teaching program may be terminated for cause by the building principal, school district human resources officer, or the Student Teaching Coordinator for serious violations of law, school district or university policies, or for gross insubordination. Before termination occurs, every effort will be made to allow the student to correct the situation. It is the intent of the teacher education program to create a condition wherein each USU student can experience success; however, each student must accept responsibility for his or her own performance and conduct.

Assumption of Risk

All classes, programs, and extracurricular activities within the University involve some risk, and certain ones involve travel. The University provides opportunities to participate in these programs on a voluntary basis. Therefore, students should not participate in them if they do not care to assume the risks. Students can ask the respective program leaders/sponsors about the possible risks a program may generate, and if students are not willing to assume the risks, they should not select that program. By voluntarily participating in classes, programs, and extracurricular activities, a student does so at his or her own risk. General information about University Risk Management policies, insurance coverage, vehicle use policies, and risk management forms can be found at: <https://www.usu.edu/risk/>