



TEACHER EDUCATION
FIELD EXPERIENCES

Field Experiences Guide





Welcome to Your Field Experience!

Field experiences give you an inside look at teaching and provide you with the opportunity to challenge prior beliefs and assumptions about teaching. Through these experiences, you will get to know more about yourself as a teacher: your strengths, weaknesses, and special interests. You may even find that you would prefer working with a certain age group or subject area that is different than what you originally expected.

It is important for you to keep in mind that the reputation you build in your field experiences will travel with you as you progress through the teacher education program and into the world of teaching. Teacher candidates are sometimes even offered a job based on their work in early field experiences!

This guide provides a general overview of the policies, procedures, and expectations for you in this experience. Please read through it carefully, and let us know if you have any questions or concerns about this or any other aspect of your experience.

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Guiding Principles as Future Educators

Future educators should:



Knowledge

... be well-grounded in student development, content areas, and assessment strategies.



Learning Environment

... create and nurture positive physical, social, and academic learning environments.



Personalized Learning

... understand ability levels, interests, and learning styles & demonstrate instruction that reflects this diversity.



Community

... understand and build relationships within the academic learning community.



Reflection

... continuously reflect on teaching experience to identify ways to improve.



Growth

... develop a philosophy of teaching & learning that demonstrates continuous professional growth.

Before Your First Visit

There are several things that you must do prior to your first visit to your host classroom:

- ☑ **Complete** and ensure all of your clearances are updated as directed by the Field Office.
- ☑ **Make** initial email contact with your cooperating teacher unless other instructions have been provided. Use this conversation to:
 - introduce yourself in the body of the email
 - communicate your start week and share the times that you have available in your “academic” schedule
 - ask the preferred method of communication with your cooperating teacher (e.g. phone, email, text)
 - set a time to discuss topics such as grading, philosophies, emergency procedures, and classroom management techniques
- ☑ **Make** transportation arrangements to and from your designated school. If you will be participating in a carpool, be sure to extend the same courtesy and level of respect as you do in your placement. Teacher candidates are responsible for arranging their own transportation to and from the assigned school. Give yourself sufficient time with inclement weather.
- ☑ **Take** a “test drive” to your placement site before your first visit!
- ☑ **Make** sure you’re all set for your first day by reviewing our Tips to Arrive Ready.

Your Letter of Introduction

A letter of introduction is your opportunity to introduce yourself to your cooperating teacher and to make a good first impression. The email should be brief, positive, and free of spelling and grammatical errors (see below).

Sample Information:

Dear Ms./Mr. <cooperating teacher last name>:

Write a paragraph that opens with a sentence in which you express your enthusiasm for your field experience. Then write a couple of sentences about your major and related interests.

Write a paragraph about your previous experience working with children. Keep it brief and positive. Be sure to include a few (2-4) of your personal goals for this field experience (**see next page**).

Write a paragraph about your academic schedule and when your schedule permits field experiences.

Close with an expression of appreciation.

Sincerely,

Typed name

Sample Email:

Dear Ms./Mr. <cooperating teacher last name>,

Hello! I just learned that I will be coming to your classroom for my ECH 320 field experience. I am currently a junior enrolled in the PreK-4 program. I am very excited to work with you and your students.

My academic schedule permits field experiences on TT (10:00 a.m. – 1 p.m.) and all day on Fridays. Would these times be conducive to your teaching schedule? Also, what would be your preferred method of communication?

The goal is for our field experiences to begin no later than the week of September 13th or possibly earlier if we are able to get everything arranged with our cooperating teachers.

Thank you for your time and your willingness to host me in your classroom this semester. I am really looking forward to this experience and look forward to hearing back from you.

<Your Name>

Examples of Possible Field Experience Goals:

- ✓ To gain experience working with small groups.
- ✓ To learn more about grading and assessment strategies.
- ✓ To learn classroom management strategies.
- ✓ To learn more about lesson planning.
- ✓ To explore ideas regarding differentiated instruction.



Arriving Ready for Your Field Experience

Arriving on time and fully prepared from your first day of field experience will help set the tone for a successful and rewarding experience. Here are a few tips to help you accomplish this:

Be fully prepared by bringing:

Copies of Your Clearances

All field experience students are expected to carry copies of your clearances. Some districts may ask you for a copy of them. However, it is imperative that you always carry them with you when attending a field placement.

Government Issued Photo ID

Many schools are now requiring all guests (including field experience students) to provide a photo ID such as a driver's license or other state issued identification. Be sure to have this with you just in case.



Other Documents & Forms

You are also expected to bring a copy of the timesheet upon which you are to record all of your field experience hours. You should carry it with you each time. Your cooperating teacher should sign this for you to return to your instructor at the end of the semester.

Be sure to review any notes from your course instructor regarding items or documents they may require you to bring to your field experience. This may include a letter from your instructor to your cooperating teacher, a letter of introduction from you to your cooperating teacher, or a timeline of what can be expected during your experience.

Arrive on Time

You should locate your host school in advance of your first day to familiarize yourself with the area and get a good sense of the amount of time it will take you to get there. On your first day, be sure to leave extra early to allow yourself time to:

- Locate a parking place.
- Find the visitor/main entrance.
- Locate the school office.
- Sign in, turn in your clearances (as requested by the district), and other documentation as needed.
- Introduce yourself to the principal and office staff if possible.
- Get to your classroom.

During Your Field Experience

Field experiences are designed to provide you with as much exposure and experiences as possible prior to student teaching and your first teaching position. To have the best possible experience, be sure to:

- 🍎 *Maintain* a positive, enthusiastic, and supportive attitude during your field experience.
- 🍎 *Interact* and actively participate with students.
- 🍎 *Focus* on the classroom - put cell phones and laptops away unless directly related to a class activity.
- 🍎 *Dress* for success!
- 🍎 *Show up* prepared, and when expected. If you will be late or absent, contact your cooperating teacher *prior to* your expected arrival time.
- 🍎 *Maintain* professional boundaries. Never leave school grounds with a student or share personal contact information (including social media).
- 🍎 *Be discreet* and *maintain confidentiality* in the classroom and outside of it.
- 🍎 *Communicate* with your cooperating teacher -- ask questions about teaching, classroom management, and students. Seek constructive feedback.
- 🍎 *Respect* and follow established classroom policies and procedures.

Suggestions for Classroom Participation

In order for you to truly benefit from your field experience, spend as much time as possible working with children. This is your opportunity to put yourself in as many different situations as possible, exploring the field of education and developing your teacher skills.

You should:

- 🍎 **Discuss and collaborate** (whenever possible) with your cooperating teacher to try out co-teaching strategies.
- 🍎 **Take ownership** of your experience. Identify the personal goals you would like to work toward during your time in the classroom and share these with your cooperating teacher.
- 🍎 **Get up** and move around. Offer your assistance and take the initiative whenever possible.
- 🍎 **Help students** stay on task through proximity or by offering assistance.
- 🍎 **Assist students** struggling with content through one-on-one or small group instruction.

Developing Active & Reflective Practices

Actively participating in the learning process and utilizing reflective practices in both learning and teaching are important skills to develop during your field experiences. The presence and use of these skills will be assessed in your field experience and your student teaching evaluations. Reflective tips from a veteran teacher (Sackstein, 2015):

- Just because you learned one way, doesn't mean it's the best way for you to teach. Get to know your kids and learn how they want to be taught; it's their turn.
- Love where you are teaching NOW, not where you could be or where you were. Finding the right fit as a teacher is everything. Decide to be a part of the community you live in not the one you wish you lived in. If you aren't happy, it's just better to leave.
- Make mistakes and relish in them. We are human and because those foibles happen, how we model self-correction defines us. Show your students making mistakes happen and it's okay.
- Apologize quickly. We all have bad days, diminish damages by saying sorry and meaning it.
- Experiment widely. Learn the technology that the kids are using and take risks in how you implement it. Always makes sure you do it with a purpose and a transparent reason.
- Keep an open mind. The smartest person in the room is the room and allowing for new ideas all the time guarantees growth. You just don't know where or when genius will happen. Let it.
- There is no one right way to do anything. Perspective is everything and problem-solving is an innovation skill. Just keep asking "what if...?"
- Challenge the status quo if for no other reason than it should always be changing appropriately with the folks you are teaching... they'll thank you for it and you'll have more fun.
- Be flexible. Just because you plan for something, doesn't mean that's the way it should happen. Read the room and adjust accordingly.
- Remember that you will never know everything, so just enjoy the learning process.
- Have fun. Teaching is the most rewarding and most challenging career around, but it will change you. Enjoy the madness.

Professionalism in Practice

Professionalism is a term you've likely heard many times in your courses, jobs, and field experiences. Professionalism is made up of a variety of components including appearance, body language, words, actions, and inaction. Your professionalism and performance will not only represent your skills and abilities, but also attest to the quality of the University which you represent.

Make your positive professional dispositions visible by demonstrating the following behaviors:

- Assuming primary responsibility for your progress.
- Maintaining on-going communications with your instructor and cooperating teacher. Be proactive in addressing questions, concerns, uncertainties and potential problems.
- Establishing positive working relationships with school district personnel, including secretarial, custodial, cafeteria, counseling and nursing staff.
- Learning and adhering to all the policies, regulations, and disciplinary codes of the school to which you have been assigned.
- Presenting yourself professionally at all times - including attire, conduct and "vocabulary" during the school day and extracurricular activities; personal web space; and email and voicemail messages. If in doubt, discuss with your building principal and cooperating teacher what is considered appropriate for your particular assignment.
- Observing and learning from teachers in other grade levels and content areas. Take advantage of the wealth of ideas, knowledge and experience surrounding you.
- Inviting constructive feedback; for example, ask the principal to observe and critique your teaching or an activity you've planned.
- Being willing to "go that extra mile."
- Taking time to thank those who help you in the various ways that you need assistance.

All teacher candidates must adhere to the Pennsylvania Department of Education Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators. Any teacher candidate, whose behavior is considered unprofessional by the cooperating teacher, University Supervisor, or principal, may be removed immediately from the assignment by the Director of Partnerships, Professional Experiences, and Outreach or by school district administrators. Meetings with the student and appropriate parties will be conducted and decisions will be made with regard to the academic future of the student.

The hallmarks of a “profession” are (1) ethical commitment; (2) shared knowledge; and (3) standards of practice. When you become a professional educator in Pennsylvania, you are expected to abide by Chapter 235: Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators in Pennsylvania. The complete code of conduct can be found at the following web site:

<https://www.pspc.education.pa.gov/Documents/Statutes%20Regs%20Forms/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>

Professional Dress

How a candidate appears is a reflection of the candidate and Shippensburg University. First impressions and patterns of appearance both will influence how students and colleagues perceive and interact with you. Dress appropriately. Candidates also should observe high standards of personal grooming and cleanliness. You are a professional and will be treated as such. Dress in a manner that is consistent with school staff expectations. This is typically referred to as Business Attire/Business Casual. Many school districts have their own dress code for teachers and professional staff; therefore, it is always best to ask at your specific location to be sure that you are not violating their specific dress code policy. Recommendations are:

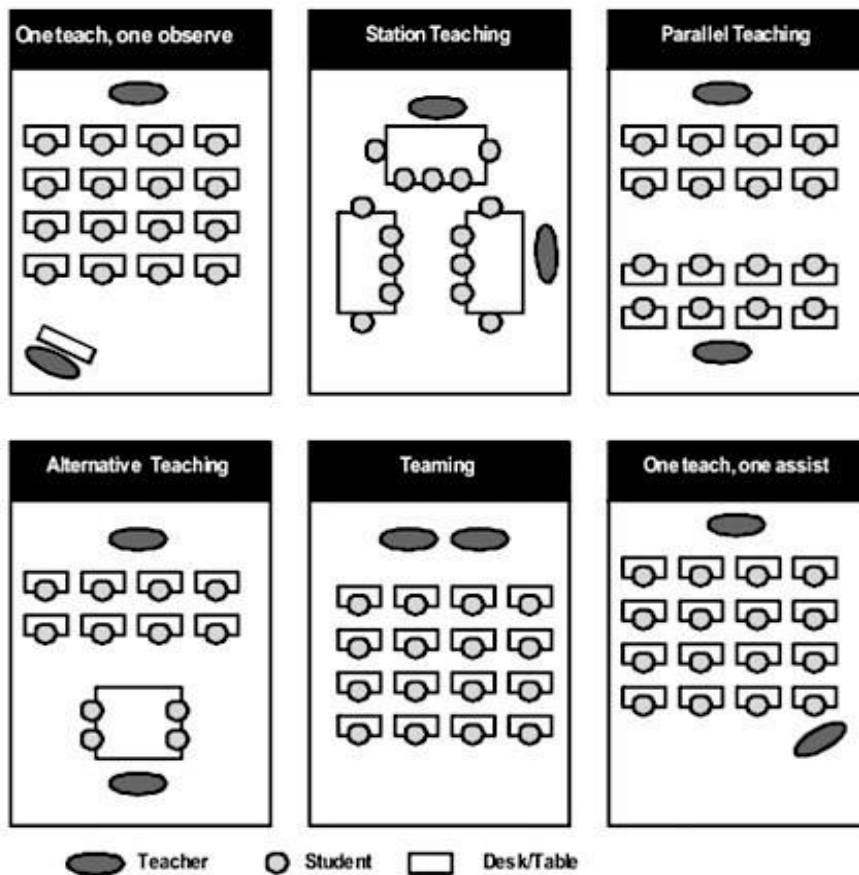
- Dresses (no more than 2 inches above the knee).
- Skirts (no more than 2 inches above the knee).
- Slacks/Khakis/Dress pants.
- Blouses/Shirts (button down or polo).
- Closed-toe shoes/Open-toe shoes with heels/Dress shoes/Loafers.
- Sport coats/jackets.
- Ties (optional) – highly recommended for the secondary setting.

In all circumstances, be sure that you can reach and bend without exposing undergarments, cleavage, midriff or backside. In general, if in doubt when preparing for school, use the following guidelines:

- No short skirts or dresses.
- No shorts.
- No low necklines.
- No tight slacks.
- No spaghetti straps or tank tops.
- No exposed midriffs.
- No slogan T-shirts.
- No sweatpants or sweatshirts.
- Denim – Blue jeans are inappropriate in many school settings, except on “dress-down days.” If you participate in the dress-day days, jeans should be free of holes.
- No flip-flops. Note: Some schools do not allow open-toe shoes/sandals.
- No yoga pants.
- Leggings are not pants. Leggings can only be worn with skirts, dresses, or long shirts that extend to mid-thigh.
- Offensive tattoos must be covered.
- Natural hair color only. Note: Some schools have this in their overall district dress code.

Co-Teaching Strategies

- Collaborative teaching is a practice used in field experiences and student teaching that shares instructional responsibilities between teacher candidates and cooperating teachers in a variety of ways (see below). These work together to provide the best possible instruction coupled with opportunities for you to gain valuable teaching experience.
- These methods are not designed to occur in any specific order; however, in early field experiences, you will likely utilize One Teach, One Observe; One Teach, One Assist; and possibly Station Teaching and/or Alternative Teaching. In later field experiences, you and your cooperating teacher may feel comfortable implementing others.



Wrapping Up

At the end of your field experience, it is your responsibility to return the timesheet you were given at the beginning of the semester. It should be complete and include the signature of your cooperating teacher.

In addition to this responsibility, you are encouraged to conclude your field experience by mailing or hand-delivering a thank you note to your cooperating teacher. Your message can be simple, acknowledging the time and effort involved as well as what you learned from the experience.

If your experience was particularly positive and you made a strong connection to your cooperating teacher, you may also want to consider requesting a letter of recommendation to include in your portfolio.



Commitment to Ethical Practices



Based on the instrument that measures candidates' professional dispositions in relation to the Apprentice Model Conceptual Framework, there are four categories that shape the ethical reasoning demonstrated by TED candidates within courses and as part of their TED major.

Tenants of TED Ethical Practice:

- Category I: Professional Learning and Ethical
 - The candidate demonstrates a commitment to his/her profession.
- Category II: Critical Thinking and Reflective Practice
 - The candidate demonstrates self-awareness and can identify/acknowledge his/her use of feedback to signify a comprehensive professional perspective.
- Category III: Leadership, Interaction and Collaboration
 - The candidate demonstrates a commitment to building relationships with peers, professionals, and the community and establishes a positive rapport with PK-8 students.
- Category IV: Stewardship for Diversity
 - The candidate demonstrates a commitment to diverse, inclusive, equitable and responsive environments.

Purpose: *to document an understanding and commitment to ethical principles and professional dispositions.*

Audience: *all TED majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels.*

Task Timeline: *to be completed each semester of the academic year and submitted in the Assignment tab in the TED Shell.*

Directions: Read each statement. Check yes, I agree or no, I have concerns for each of the 10 statements. Provide an explanation for each statement in which you have a concern. Add your personal contact information and sign the form. Upload the completed form to the Assignment tab in the **Commitment to Ethical Practices** folder. Failure to complete this form will result in a dispositions intervention managed at the TED level.

Respond to each statement.

1. Yes, I agree to demonstrate consistent **effective communication** in written and oral formats, including following the Chain of Command for Communication Practices to share questions, comments or concerns at the course and/or TED level.
 No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

2. Yes, I agree to demonstrate **professional expectations**, including maintaining a professional appearance, attendance, and prompt and professional responsiveness in all course and TED related experiences.
 No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

3. Yes, I agree to demonstrate **ethical practices**, including maintaining confidentiality, fairness, equity, and professional integrity when working with teachers/professors and PK-8 students. This includes responsibility accessing and using information on the TED D2L Shell for TED purposes only.
 No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

4. Yes, I agree to demonstrate an academic commitment to **professional decision making and confidentiality**, including recognizing subjective and objective data and how it informs my emergence as a professional. This includes realizing that I will not share any confidential information relating to a child, children, teachers, and school/districts for any purpose outside of course related assignments or TED sponsored initiatives or assessments.
 No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

5. Yes, I agree to demonstrate **purposeful self-reflection** of contextual, cultural, and personal factors that influence clinical decision making and practices. This includes **integrating feedback** in an effort to document my growth as a professional.
 No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

6. _____ Yes, I agree to demonstrate a **positive outlook related to all PK-8 students' ability to learn** and how my instructional choices influence students' learning outcomes. This includes a willingness to a consistently productive approach to problem-solving that builds independence.
 _____ No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:
7. _____ Yes, I agree to demonstrate an **appreciation for differences among people** and PK-8 students, including their learning, language and cultural differences.
 _____ No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:
8. _____ Yes, I agree to demonstrate an **engagement in community building** to cultivate interdisciplinary and interprofessional relationships to transform PK-12 students' growth and development.
 _____ No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:
9. _____ Yes, I agree to demonstrate a commitment to **advocating for the field of education** and the needs of PK-8 students.
 _____ No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:
10. _____ Yes, I agree to demonstrate **service to my profession**, including participating in professional development experiences sponsored at the course or TED level, as well as participating in education club sponsored experiences/initiatives.
 _____ No, I have a concern with the above statement. Provide an explanation of your concern*.
Explanation:

Personal Data

Your Name	
SU email address	
Semester/Term	

I testify that the above statements are accurate and reflect my commitment to ethical practices and professional dispositions.

Signature:

Date:

**A candidate with one or more than one "I have concerns with the above statement" rating will be required to meet with a committee chair and/or TED chair to enact dispositional interventions to ensure that the candidate's concerns are addressed.*

Questions or Concerns?



Email:

fieldexperiences@ship.edu



Call:

717.477.1487



Search:

https://www.ship.edu/academics/colleges/coehs/office_of_field_services/



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