

Expectations for the Cooperating Teacher

Having a student teacher can strengthen classroom learning. Since two heads can be better than one, two teachers planning and teaching together will benefit students in significant ways.

Recent research indicates that in today's classroom pupils benefit significantly when co-teaching becomes a significant dimension of the cooperating teacher-student teacher professional relationship. Perl (1999) defines co-teaching as a student teacher and a cooperating teacher working together with groups of students and sharing the delivery of instruction and physical space. With co-teaching, the amount of time the student teacher is left totally alone is reduced. Perl recommends that as a general rule of thumb the student teacher should be left alone to work with full class instruction about 15% to 20% of the time.

Having a student teacher also brings personal satisfaction to the supervising teacher. To have shared in the making of a capable and responsible member of the teaching profession is indeed a great reward.

Cooperating teachers play a crucial role in the student teaching program. They are key persons from beginning to end. Suggestions for carrying out this function follow:

Orienting the Student Teacher

1. Speak of the EMU student as a colleague rather than as a student teacher, but do not oversell your student teacher so that the student teacher finds it hard to live up to the pupils' expectations.
2. If possible, have a desk or table placed in the classroom for the student teacher's use. A "home base" for keeping materials is important.
3. You may want to have the pupils plan how they may help to orient the "assisting teacher" to the classroom and to the school.
4. Confer with your principal regarding a schedule of activities for the student teacher as appropriate in your school.
5. Assemble a packet of materials which describe the school situation: faculty and student handbooks, releases from the administrative office, school calendar, floor plan of the building, description of grading system, fire drill procedures, etc.
6. Have available copies of textbooks, lesson plan book, and grade book for the student teacher's use.
7. Help fellow teachers and parents to develop a favorable attitude toward the student teacher and the student teaching program. You may wish to send a form letter to parents, preparing them for the arrival of the student teacher.
8. Plan for systematic supervision and continuous evaluation using formal and informal approaches.

The Student Teacher's First Day

You may not notice it, but the day your student teacher arrives in your school, the student's knees will be shaking. The student teacher needs security!

1. Welcome them and help them to relax through friendly conversational interchange.
2. Introduce the student teacher to your pupils and other members of the school staff (including cooks and custodians).

3. Take time during the day to talk with your student teacher about your expectations during the next weeks: schedules, material to be covered, lesson plans, school and classroom routines, tasks to be completed, etc. This would be a good time to give your student teacher the orientation materials you have prepared.
4. Clarify expectations for the student teacher at the outset of the experience. Regular informal and structured talks concerning plans and progress are necessary if the student teacher is to be successful.

Busy Weeks for Professional Maturing

Your goal as a cooperating teacher is to provide enough experiences during student teaching to allow the student teacher to "get the feel of the classroom." That's a difficult task, even though you are an experienced teacher, but that should be the direction of your efforts.

Since the performance of student teachers varies, we cannot expect them to be equally able at the end of the experience. Some will attain a polished and distinguished level, while others will perform at proficient and acceptable levels. We look for growth and maturation, plus a level of competence that makes it reasonably certain that each one will succeed in the classroom.

The student teaching experience seeks to develop teaching competence through four primary techniques. They are observation, co-teaching, responsible teaching, and conference. The first three of these phases are not mutually exclusive, nor must one phase be completed before another begins. (Your student teacher will have had experiences in observation and in participation before coming to you.)

A. Observation

During this phase, the student teacher should get acquainted with the school. Your student teacher needs to be guided in what to look for. The student teacher should become acquainted with:

- your teaching methods
- the classroom organization and management
- characteristics of pupils in general and individually
- instructional materials
- means of providing for individual differences
- the program of extracurricular activities
- the administrative regulations and the school organization
- cumulative records of pupils
- professional activities of the school staff
- the philosophy and objectives of the school
- the procedures used by other teachers through occasional visits to their rooms

Ease your student teacher into classroom teaching responsibilities. Make sure your "co-teacher" has had an opportunity to learn the pupils' names, observe the organizational planning which you use with the subject, and make careful plans for teaching which you have approved.

B. Participation and Co-Teaching

The student teacher should gradually assume the duties of the regular teacher. The rate at which these responsibilities are assumed will be up to you and the student teacher. The concern of the university is that responsibilities be progressive in proportion to capacity and readiness. Most student teachers should be ready for some responsible teaching by the second week. Some will be ready toward the end of the first week. By participating in the class activities the student teacher should:

- get to know the subject matter and select materials for instruction
- understand the need for punctuality and for being in the classroom before the students arrive
- accept responsibility for order and proper conduct of pupils in the classroom before the students arrive
- handle routine jobs such as adjusting shades, checking ventilation, erasing blackboards, taking roll, distributing materials, collecting papers

Since the written evaluation will become part of the student's placement credentials, we are asking that careful thought be given to the wording. It should represent clearly and fairly the new teacher's readiness for the profession, including strengths and limitations, and the student teacher's chances of success in a teaching position.

The evaluation forms are also available online: <http://www.emu.edu/education/st-forms/>

F. Additional Information

1. In case of an emergency or serious problem, call the Coordinator of Field Placements at (540) 432-4142. In case of illness, student teachers are responsible for contacting both the EMU education department and the school where student teaching is taking place.
2. The student teacher is not to be absent from his/her assignment for any reason whatsoever except in cases of personal illness or death in the immediate family. Report any deviations in attendance immediately to the university consultant.
3. A student teacher may not receive payment for student teaching. The student teacher must be under the supervision of a licensed teacher at all times.
4. Have your student teacher participate in as many extra-classroom professional activities as possible: a visit to a pupil's home, observation of parent-teacher conferences, and attendance at faculty meetings, PTA, education association meetings, etc.
5. The student teacher should be able to use school equipment such as the copy machine and computers.

- develop the ability to share in the teaching activity by making assignments and announcements, putting items on chalk/bulletin boards, and assisting pupils having difficulties

During this time you might give your student teacher additional practice by requiring some lesson plans that you will evaluate.

Friend and Cook (1996) advocate various forms of co-teaching including the following: (1) *One teach, One drift*--one teacher does the teaching while the other assists students; (2) *Parallel Teaching*--the classroom is split in half and both instructors teach the same information at the same time; (3) *Alternative Teaching*--one teacher manages most of the class while the other teacher works with a small group inside or outside the classroom; (4) *Station Teaching*--both teachers facilitate various teaching stations in the classroom; (5) *Team Teaching*--two teachers serve as one with both teachers engaging in conversation without lecture.

C. Responsible Teaching

This is the goal toward which all other student teaching experiences are pointed. Your "co-teacher" should be inducted into teaching gradually, adding classes as s/he can carry them successfully. During this time it is appropriate for the cooperating teacher to become an "assistant" and place the responsibility for planning and leading with the student teacher. It is desirable for the student teacher to assume leadership responsibility for **all** classes for a minimum of three weeks for a seven-week placement.

The following suggestions apply to this phase of the student teacher's experience:

- Preplan by making out a calendar of teaching responsibilities for the entire semester.
- Radiate cooperation, guidance, and professional behavior in order to instill such behavior in the student teacher.
- Give the student teacher encouragement to develop new ideas and to put them into practice. Foster self-confidence as sincerely and as often as possible.
- Insist that a thorough plan be made for the teaching activity--more detailed at first, less detailed later.
- Help the student teacher to put variety into lesson plans. Depending upon individual styles of the student teacher, your suggestions may have to be more or less directive.
- Get the student teacher involved in classroom activities early in the experience. Help the student teacher to anticipate discipline problems and to guide pupils in self-discipline.
- Don't hesitate to leave the classroom for short periods of 10-15 minutes at first, depending upon the capabilities of the student teacher.
- Develop co-teaching strategies as appropriate.

D. Conferences

It is in the conference sessions that the student teacher is helped to understand the dynamics of the classroom situation. In order to provide an opportunity for self-evaluation, professional growth, and a sense of security, your "co-teacher" needs frequent occasions to talk about observations and experiences.

We recommend brief daily and/or longer weekly conferences. This is your opportunity for cooperative planning. Criticize positively and in the spirit of sharing. **Please be straightforward.**

In addition to the conferences that you will arrange with your student teacher, the university consultant will have group and/or individual conferences with the student teacher.

E. Reporting

The education department has tried to keep the paper work for the cooperating teacher to a minimum. We are asking for completed observation reports (5 from clinical faculty, 2 from non-clinical faculty), weekly progress reports, a mid-term evaluation at the halfway mark, and a final evaluation due the final week of the placement, which includes a completed rating scale and a written evaluation of the student. An evaluation of the university consultant is also requested. Forms are provided and evaluations should be shared with the student teacher.