

## THE COOPERATING TEACHER

As a school based experience, the clinical practice is unique and dependent upon the collaboration of many different people. The clinical intern, the cooperating teacher and the clinical supervisor are those most directly involved in the daily classroom experience. Others, such as the building administrator, university faculty and administrators, and school faculty and staff members, contribute also to the outcome of the clinical practice.

Research studies indicate that the single most important individual in the professional internship semester is the cooperating teacher. This person interacts daily with a teacher candidate and provides the classroom setting necessary for a satisfying and successful clinical experience. Much depends upon the development of a nurturing and productive relationship between the cooperating teacher and the clinical intern.

### A. Responsibilities

1. The Cooperating Teacher assumes responsibility for:
  - a. becoming acquainted with the background of the clinical intern and using the information to help the student grow as a professionally.
  - b. preparing the classroom pupils for the arrival of the teacher candidate.
  - c. creating a climate that allows the clinical intern to meet the required competencies by supporting creative efforts and multiple approaches.
  - d. acquainting the clinical intern with school policies and safety procedures such as fire drills and lockdowns.
  - e. orienting the clinical intern to the faculty, staff, school, and community.
  - f. providing a specific workplace in his/her classroom for the clinical intern.
  - g. attending staff meetings and Board of Education meeting and participating in professional and instructional activities as well as school district cultural events.
  - h. involving the clinical intern actively in after-school student activities.
  - i. reviewing and critiquing the clinical intern's daily lesson plans, and with his/her signature, approving the plans.
  - j. sharing and modeling assessment methods and recording grades of P-12 students.
  - k. encouraging the clinical intern to ask questions and experiment, and then to reflect upon what worked and why.
  - l. providing frequent encouragement, constructive criticism, and recognition of success.
  - m. urging the clinical intern to visit the classes of other teachers who are working with students of different ability, in other subject areas/grade levels, or trying an innovative approach and facilitating these visits by gaining the other teacher's permission prior to the visits.
  - n. keeping a record of the clinical intern's progress and submitting mid-term and final assessment reports relative to his/her professional growth and development.

- o. involving the clinical intern in a variety of instructional methods and strategies including cooperative learning, portfolio assessment, and the use of technology including multimedia and computers.
- p. providing time for and maintaining communication with the clinical supervisor/clinical instructor. If the cooperating teacher has concerns, it is very important to communicate about issues.
- q. recognizing that planning and classroom management are two areas most clinical interns need to practice and strengthen during their internship semester.
- r. assisting the clinical intern to develop as a professional by:
  - 1. aiding in the transition from university student to teacher.
  - 2. enabling him/her to develop an understanding of the aims and purposes of education.
  - 3. fostering an atmosphere in which self-evaluation is valued.
- s. participating in university-sponsored professional development activities.
- t. reinforcing the awareness of state and national initiatives and standards, including *NJCCC Standards (2011)* and *NJ Professional Standards for Teachers (2015)*.
- u. remaining in the classroom with the teacher candidate. The student teacher shall be under the direct and continuous personal supervision of the appropriately certified cooperating teacher.

2. The Cooperating Teacher guides observation and instruction by:

- a. encouraging the clinical intern to use an organized method to record classroom observations and suggesting teacher procedures and behavior to look for in each area.
- b. providing frequent (weekly, at least) opportunities for an in-depth discussion of the cooperating teacher's observations of the clinical intern's performance.
- c. collaborating the clinical intern and others on a variety of people in the professional environment.
  - the pupils or participants.
  - the cooperating teacher/practitioner.
  - other teachers or professionals within the school or grade level.
  - other professional interns and practicum students.
  - other agency or school service personnel.
- d. demonstrating the relationship between instruction and curriculum with
  - school/district policies and procedures.
  - planning and assessment.
  - appropriate strategies and resources.
  - classroom management procedures.
  - pupil interaction, particularly as it relates to learning.
  - pupil-teacher interactions.
  - pupil-pupil interactions.
  - physical conditions of the classroom and school.
  - instructional technology, media and materials.
  - parents and guardians.
  - classroom environment conducive to learning.
- e. developing a plan for classroom management consistent with school/district discipline policy.
  - discuss the plan and why it works.

- furnish a copy of classroom rules and procedures or the code of conduct currently in use.
  - provide management and planning ideas.
  - encourage the development of the student's own management style.
  - identify professional resources, articles, journals and books from which a clinical intern might gather additional information and practices.
- f. discussing with the clinical intern: *NJCCC Standards (2011) and NJ Professional Standards for Teachers (2015)* and their impact on daily instruction.
  - g. reviewing and discussing the use of the curriculum as a guide for choosing materials and strategies as well as planning for the day, week, month and school year.
  - h. clarifying the expectations for lesson plans:
    - Clinical interns are required to write formal lesson plans.
    - Cooperating teachers are asked to approve and sign lesson plans prior to their use.
  - i. introduce the intern to the "life of the school."

## **B. What Clinical Interns Appreciate**

Clinical interns appreciate a cooperating teacher who:

- makes the clinical intern feel welcome and comfortable in the school.
- is available and willing to respond to questions and concerns of the clinical intern.
- gives formal and informal feedback to the clinical intern on lessons, management, planning, etc.
- identifies topics or items on which the clinical intern is to focus.
- encourages the intern to try his/her own ideas and not to be a "carbon copy" of the cooperating teacher.
- demonstrates a variety of teaching strategies.
- takes the clinical intern to faculty meetings, committee meetings, professional development sessions.
- helps the intern reflect on his/her personal management style and its effectiveness with students.
- displays an interest in future plans of the clinical intern.
- familiarizes the intern with diagnostic screening tests and discusses how to use test results as an effective teaching tool.
- shares grading procedures and practices, school and/or district grading policies, and authentic assessment specifics with the clinical intern.
- includes the intern in parent conferences or child-study sessions as appropriate.
- assists the clinical intern in planning, writing and administering assessment techniques, i.e., tests, portfolios, journals or checklists.
- enjoys the pleasures and satisfactions of teaching while acknowledging the stress that is linked to the responsibilities of the task.

### C. Assessment

During the semester of clinical practice internship the cooperating teacher is recognized as the professional who bears the major responsibilities for ongoing support, positive language, effective classroom management, content mastery, and modeling of successful teaching practices. This unique relationship, predicated on time involvement and space proximity, places the cooperating teacher in a role to assess the daily progress of the emerging teacher.

A cooperating teacher is requested to:

1. select lessons during the semester to formally observe and evaluate and give the clinical intern feedback as soon as possible after those observations;
2. complete and submit online the *Professional Internship Performance Competency Assessment* at mid-term as well as at the conclusion of the semester. A sample copy is available in Appendix G.
3. complete and submit online the Supplemental Program Assessment for the intern's content area;
4. discuss with the clinical intern his/her competency levels throughout the semester and thoroughly at its end;
5. file a *Special Case In Field Experience* form if warranted. A sample copy is available in Appendix I.
6. confer with the clinical intern and clinical supervisor on an ongoing basis throughout the semester to discuss areas of strength or those in need of improvement.
7. complete and submit online the mid-term and final competency assessments.

### D. Professional Development Hours & Honorarium

An honorarium as well as Professional Development Hours are awarded to cooperating teachers who mentor interns based upon the intern's educational program.

In order to receive a certificate awarding professional development hours and the honorarium, cooperating teachers must return the Request for Honorarium and Professional Development Hours Form . This form can be found in the cooperating teacher's information packet .

Certificates will be mailed to the cooperating teacher' home address based upon the following schedule:

	Form Due to the <u>College of Education</u>	Certificate <u>Mailed</u>
Fall Semester	November 1	by April 1
Spring Semester	March 1	by June 1

Only honorarium requests received during the academic year (July 1 – June 30) in which the in-service teacher acted as a cooperating teacher will be honored.

### E. What can I do when I see my student teacher struggling during a lesson?

It's important to remember that student teachers are still students: They are not experienced teachers, and they will make mistakes. When they do, an effective cooperating teacher will guide the student teacher back on track before significant damage can be done to the student teacher's confidence or to students' learning and safety. Cooperating teachers must walk a fine line between allowing student teachers to make mistakes and learn from them, and ensuring that students receive quality instruction.

A 2007 study by Donna M. Post identified the following strategies used by experienced cooperating teachers when student teachers had difficulty during a lesson. Choosing the least intrusive action appropriate for the situation allows the cooperating teacher to keep the lesson on track without causing much damage to the student teacher's development or to the students' learning. Most of the following techniques can be used several times within a single lesson. It is a good idea to discuss the strategies with your student teacher before using them, and to always address his or her struggles in a conference after class.

### Effective I's (lowest level of disruption to highest)

**Ignore:** If the problem can be discussed at a later time and the situation will not cause harm to students, the cooperating teacher may refrain from any action that would undermine the student teacher's authority. This should be a conscious choice on the part of the cooperating teacher. Examples include: ignoring a spelling error in a word that the students already know how to spell; choosing not to draw attention to a grammatical error or mispronunciation.

**Intervene:** Cooperating teacher intervention is used when the student teacher is not aware of a problem or not experienced enough to solve it. Intervention is usually unnoticed or appreciated by the student teacher, and does not disrupt the student teacher's lesson. Examples include: moving an overhead projector that blocks students' vision; turning off Bunsen burners accidentally left on.

**Interject:** The cooperating teacher may interject a very short comment that does not interrupt the flow of the lesson and is quickly forgotten by the students and the student teacher. Examples include: providing a word that the student teacher is struggling to find; correcting word pronunciation.

**Interact:** The cooperating teacher sends a verbal or nonverbal message that requires a few seconds of the student teacher's attention and quickly redirects the student teacher's actions or thoughts. Students may or may not be aware of the interaction. This is the most common cooperating teacher response to a student teacher's struggle in front of the class. Examples include: writing a few words on a sticky note to draw the student teacher's attention to a cheating incident or sleeping student; telling the student teacher in a low voice that it's time to get ready for lunch or that he or she has missed a step in giving directions for a class activity.

**Interrupt:** A cooperating teacher may choose to interrupt when something important needs to be communicated immediately. An interruption is highly visible and/or audible to the student teacher and students, and disrupts the flow of the lesson. An interruption lasts longer than an intervention, but the student teacher always finishes the lesson. Examples include: speaking aloud to remind the student teacher and class of a classroom rule; providing an example that would benefit the students and student teacher.

**Intercept:** The cooperating teacher completely takes over the lesson and brings it to closure, moving the students, student teacher, and cooperating teacher toward a common goal. This action is most intrusive and may leave the student teacher feeling disappointed. Examples include: bringing a class's behavior under control when the student teacher is unable to do so; ending a student teacher's long and boring

lecture; stepping in when the student teacher is unable to proceed due to illness, nervousness, or lack of preparation.

Based on: Post, D.M. (2007). The cooperating teacher I's: Effective mid-lesson responses to student teachers' critical teaching incidents. *Action in Teacher Education*, 29(1), 61-70.