

## FIELD EXPERIENCE

Most courses in the Teacher Education Program incorporate opportunities for you to apply knowledge and theory to practice. Field experiences are planned to provide a gradual, sequential, and coherent introduction to the full range of teaching possibilities. They are integrated within the goals of professional education coursework and supervised by university faculty and school personnel.

Field experiences enable you to develop understandings of the school as a social system, and of the relationship of the school to the larger community. Field experiences enhance your awareness of student and school diversity. They provide a more comprehensive view of the demands of the teaching profession. Field experiences also help you recognize the dilemmas and opportunities inherent in teaching. These opportunities help you assess whether teaching is a good fit for you. Sometimes, as a result of early field experiences, students elect to withdraw from the Teacher Education Program and to prepare for an alternative career. In addition, evaluations of student performance during field experiences assist faculty and students in identifying areas requiring particular attention.

Fieldwork occurs primarily in elementary, middle, and secondary schools, but may also include involvement with child care programs and other community settings that serve children and families. It is in the field that you continue to learn the language, practices and expectations of your chosen profession, as you observe the skills of experienced professionals. It is in the field where you will develop competence in the classroom and in your interactions with children, discover your individual teaching abilities, and demonstrate your resourcefulness and professional responsibilities. You will learn to work cooperatively and collaboratively with teachers, principals and other professionals working in school settings (for example, social workers, school psychologist, speech therapists, and special education personnel). You will develop skills in communicating and interacting effectively with parents, with whom you work in partnership in the children's behalf. Finally, it is in the field that you become a self-reflective practitioner and researcher in your own classroom.

Note: You are encouraged to gain experience with children and in schools outside the professional education curriculum, but these hours may NOT count toward the field experience requirement. **You may not be placed in your home school or with a relative.**

### Field Experience Guidelines

*Under no circumstances are students to contact school personnel to arrange placements.*

Public schools are not required to offer field placements. Your field placements are a result of the hard work and dedication of local school faculty and administrative staff working in partnership with Educational Studies and Music faculty. Your placements are planned so that you may gain the most out of the experience. Cooperating teachers working with you in pre-student teaching placements receive no compensation for this arrangement. *Therefore, please show your appreciation to them for creating this opportunity for you.*

It is understandable that you might feel some trepidation when encountering a new experience – and in particular becoming a guest member of a school and/or classroom community. While you may have been in schools before, you most likely have not taken on a professional role. This guide is meant to help you make the transition from college student to school professional.

**Required Hours.** A minimum of one hundred hours of *documented* field experience is required for all certification candidates prior to student teaching. Each course has a specified *minimum* number of hours required over the term. You should attend your field placement site until the last day of classes, regardless of the number of hours accumulated, as cooperating teachers are counting on your participation for the entire semester. Record your hours and activities on the *Field Experience Log* (<http://www2.iwu.edu/edstudies/>), obtain your cooperating teacher's signature, and submit the log to your professors at the end of the term.

**Scheduling Field Hours.** Students registered for Educational Studies 225 and 255 must meet with the Field Placement Coordinator (CLA 143) to sign up for days and times that work best with your schedule. You must sign up before the end of the semester. Students enrolled in 300 level Educational Studies courses will be assigned placements and notified at the start of the term for which they apply.

**Confirming Your Schedule.** Once directed to do so by your professor, call or e-mail your cooperating teacher to confirm your placement days and hours. Be sure you can meet the hourly requirement each week (during the spring term, with the public school and IWU spring breaks occurring at different times, it is a challenge to complete required hours over the term). When you meet with your cooperating teacher to finalize your schedule, avoid scheduling arrival and departure times during the middle of class periods as much as possible. This will reduce disruption and maximize time to communicate with your cooperating teacher.

*When you sign up for your field hours, you make a commitment.* Your cooperating teacher has been informed of your schedule. The only approved reason for changing your placement time is another academic class commitment. On-campus work-study jobs must accommodate students' academic requirements, which include field placement. If necessary, ask your professor to contact your campus employer to make this clear. To initiate a change in your field placement schedule, contact Amy Jacobi (x3926, CLA 143, [ajacobi@iwu.edu](mailto:ajacobi@iwu.edu)), but **FIRST** speak with your professor. Changes are rarely made, cannot be guaranteed, and must be approved by the cooperating teacher.

**Punctuality.** When rare circumstances make it impossible to be punctual, call the school. *Be sure your message is communicated clearly and to the right person.*

Absences should be limited to illness, family emergencies, and official school holidays. Absences must **ALWAYS** be communicated to your professor and school personnel as soon as possible. If you must be absent, call the school office. Be sure to leave a message specifically for your cooperating teacher, clearly communicating the reason for your absence. E-mail the cooperating teacher as soon as possible. All absences must be made up before or during finals week. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent, be sure to give your cooperating teacher and IWU professor advance notice.

**Transportation and Parking.** You are responsible for your own transportation. Some schools are within walking distance of IWU; public transportation goes to all schools. If you drive your own car, note that school parking resources usually are limited. Ask school personnel where you are to park and then park in designated parking spaces only! Failure to do so interferes with transportation for students and teachers, as well as compromises access to the school by emergency vehicles. Cars that are not parked in areas designated for parking may be *towed at your expense*.

When in your car, DO NOT pass the school buses as they load at the end of the school day. When the buses are loading and the stop arms are out, it is illegal, and extremely dangerous to pass — even in a parking lot. The bus drivers are watching and will report drivers who violate the law to the police.

**Security Protocol.** Learn the procedures for admittance to the school building, including signing in and out at the office each day you are at the school. Do NOT sign out at the same time you sign in. There are often circumstances when school personnel may need to know if you are in the building, and failing to follow this protocol can be very problematic.

Purchase an IWU lanyard and ID sleeve from the IWU bookstore. Put your IWU ID card in the sleeve of the badge. While at your field placement site, always wear your IWU lanyard with your student ID. *You may not be admitted to the school, or be asked to leave the school, if you are not wearing your ID.*

## **Professional Conduct**

### **In the classroom:**

- Ask your cooperating teacher to introduce you, or give you an opportunity to introduce yourself to the students. Explain to them that you are there to learn from them, as well as to help out.
- Upon arrival each day, check in with your cooperating teacher to review your responsibilities. Cooperating teachers have been told that you will be spending the first few days observing, taking notes and learning the routines and culture of the classroom. After that, teachers are likely to ask you to help out by working with individual and small groups of students, and other teaching-related tasks. Be a willing and enthusiastic participant! Be sure to ask your teacher how you can help out.
- Candidates enrolled in 300 level classes may be asked to plan and conduct specific lessons, in consultation with the cooperating teacher.
- There is a lot to be learned. *If you are uncertain about what to do in a situation, ask!* As a teacher you must be comfortable speaking in front of the classroom and working with students.

### **Interacting with students:**

- Learn as many of your students' names as early as possible.
- You are never to be assigned sole responsibility for supervision of children. School personnel must always be with you when children are present. **Never** take a student outside.
- Treat your students with respect but demonstrate *appropriate distance* from them. Do not allow them to call you by your first name if this is not their practice with other teachers. Do not divulge information of a personal nature, and do not socialize with students after class. Be conscious of the tone of your language as well as your choice of words. Learn the school's policy regarding touching students. If you are inappropriate in your interactions your cooperating teacher will let us know. Maintain a professional rapport and you will have a successful placement.
- If a student shares information with you regarding an abusive situation, a drug problem, or a suicide attempt, it is your responsibility to report the information to appropriate school officials *immediately*. Inform the student that you cannot maintain confidentiality under these circumstances. Also complete an *Incident Report Form*, available at the Educational Studies Office, (CLA 146), and submit it to the Director of Teacher Education.

**Dress.** Wear clothes that are comfortable, but clean and neat. Do not wear hats or sunglasses inside the building. Do not wear t-shirts, especially those with inappropriate language or graphics. Do not chew gum or eat candy on school premises. Do not wear earrings anywhere but on your ears. Do not dye your

hair any unnatural color. Women should not wear very short skirts, low cut blouses, or low rise jeans without a long shirt. Your midriff should not be exposed. Men with long hair should tie it back. Remember, you are not a student while at the school, but a professional, so save your experimentation for on-campus life. **Always wear your IWU ID lanyard with your IWU ID card in the sleeve.** *Note: School personnel may require you to adhere to more specific dress codes.*

**Communicating with teachers.** If you have questions about your work with students, take the time to talk with teachers. Teachers want to be supportive, but remember that they can't know what help you need unless you communicate with them. Try to catch them before and after classes and school. As the school day is usually hectic for everyone, many teachers prefer that you e-mail them. The address for most teachers in Bloomington schools is their last name followed by their first initial and then "@district87.org." For Unit 5 teachers' e-mail addresses, log onto [www.unit5.org](http://www.unit5.org); all teacher e-mail addresses are listed under each particular school's website.

Do not publicly contradict or challenge school personnel. Although you may be working at and contributing to the school, you are a guest and a representative of IWU and should conduct yourself accordingly. *This is your opportunity to demonstrate your emerging professionalism.* If you have concerns about your participation, discuss them with your professor, the Field Placement Coordinator, Amy Jacobi, or the Director of Teacher Education. Students engaging in unprofessional behavior jeopardize their status in the Teacher Education Program, and field placements for all IWU students.

**Maintain confidentiality** about individual students, teachers, and families connected with the school. Refrain from casual discussion about students in their presence, or the presence of other adults, including teachers and school personnel, when not warranted. Before starting your field hours you must sign a *Confidentiality Agreement* (CLA 146). The exception to confidentiality is if you believe that a student is in danger of harming him/herself or someone else, or if you suspect abuse or neglect.

**You are a mandated child abuse and neglect reporter.** This means you are obliged to act on any suspicion that you have that a child may be in danger. Refer to the Illinois Department of Children and Families manual for guidelines (<http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/Mandated.pdf>). It is not your role to determine if there is actual danger or abuse. When in doubt as to what to do, contact a school official or your professor. You must follow school protocols for reporting any concerns about a student. Failure to do so will affect the assessment of your professional conduct in the Teacher Education Program. Should you disagree with the decision of school personnel, you may take whatever individual steps you believe are required. *You will do so independent of District 87 or Unit 5 status.* As a professional courtesy, inform school personnel and the Director of Teacher Education of any independent actions you take regarding child abuse reporting.

**Incident Reporting Protocol.** In the event you perceive that a student is likely to do harm to self or others, an immediate report must be made to school personnel. When there is some question as to what constitutes a critical incident, err on the side of caution. Do not leave the school building before you report concerns about a student to a counselor, your cooperating teacher or another person in authority. Contact and inform your professor of your concerns and actions within 24 hours of an incident to debrief, that is share (1) what you saw/heard; (2) what the student did; and (3) to whom you reported. Please ask Educational Studies faculty for assistance in processing critical events. Complete an *Incident Report Form* (CLA 146) and turn it in to your professor. These confidential records are kept until deemed no longer necessary.