



Utilizing Tomorrow's Hires, Today: Supporting & Sustaining Meaningful Student Teaching and Fieldwork Experiences

Many school districts are hesitant to accept teacher candidates for student teaching or fieldwork experiences, because they are perceived as an added responsibility for already overburdened teachers and administrators. However, supporting student teaching and other fieldwork experiences for teachers in training is vital to ensuring the state's pipeline of highly qualified, certified teachers now and into the future.

The reality is that student teachers and fieldwork candidates are assets in school buildings across the state, supporting teachers, students, and district efforts while honing their own professional practice. Evidence shows that students are more engaged and achievement improves when a student teacher is in the classroom. Teacher candidates support student learning by serving in a variety of roles (e.g., tutoring one-on-one; facilitating small group instruction, etc.).

Additionally, supporting teacher candidates in training can alleviate teacher shortages in many content areas. Research indicates that student teachers are more likely to teach in your district after they complete their preparation programs and are more likely to remain in your district longer than other hires.

Through partnerships between districts and educator preparation providers (EPPs), we can reimagine how best to structure student teaching placements and fieldwork experiences to address student needs within the district and improve teacher preparation. Below we list just some of the ways that teacher candidates serve as assets in their student teaching and fieldwork experiences, both in person and virtually.

Teacher in Training, Promising Practices

Student teacher and fieldwork experience candidates can assist in multiple ways:

- Assist in locating and setting up technology and online tools
- Modify instructional materials and assessments for online delivery
- Post materials online for students and families
- Develop short videos on focus topics or read-alouds
- Create support resources for lessons
- Monitor small groups either in-class or online
- Assist the cooperating teacher with monitoring two simultaneous classes — one in person and one online
- Modify lessons for particular student needs and translation instructions for ELs, special education, or bilingual students
- Provide support to students who need additional support
- Provide small group instruction to reteach or fill in gaps

- Conduct one-on-one meetings as well as small groups
- Grade work and give feedback on student assignments
- Teach small group lessons designed to assess prior learning
- Serve as a virtual/remote tutors

Additionally, districts may utilize student teachers and fieldwork candidates more broadly within their buildings by assigning candidates to grade-level teams or school buildings rather than to a single teacher, allowing the candidate time to be used flexibly to assist target students. Encouraging opportunities to implement team teaching and co-teaching approaches yields great results for teachers, candidates in training, and students.

Resources:

Addressing Shortages of Educators in an Uncertain COVID-19 Landscape: Viewing Teacher Candidates as Assets <https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/addressing-shortages-educators-uncertain-covid-19-landscape-viewing-teacher>



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Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

As instructional practices shift to include distance-based learning as a result of the pandemic, questions arise regarding the ability of university/college supervisors to observe student teachers' lessons in a virtual setting. As with all such questions, each district must address this issue with legal counsel. However, communications from both the CSDE and U.S. Department of Education indicate that the inclusion of visitors, clinical placement candidates and their supervisors in a virtual learning environment generally would not violate FERPA as FERPA neither requires nor prohibits individuals from observing a classroom.

"Under federal guidance, the determination of who can observe a virtual classroom, similar to an in-person classroom, is a local school decision since teachers generally do not disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education record during classroom instruction. FERPA neither requires nor prohibits individuals from observing a classroom." — April 7, 2020 CSDE Memo

Resources:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2019-20/April-7-2020-FERPA-and-Privacy-Memo.pdf?la=en>

https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/FERPA%20%20Virtual%20Learning%20032020_FINAL.pdf

https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/FERPAandVirtualLearning.pdf

Key Reminders and Updates

Placements

In-person, hybrid and virtual placements all satisfy regulatory requirements for fieldwork experiences.

TEAM Trained Cooperating Teachers

Reminder: 2020–21 flexibilities allow student teachers to be assigned to a cooperating teacher who has not yet been trained, provided they are trained by February 15 for the spring semester.

Diversifying the Educator Workforce

As Connecticut continues efforts to diversify the educator workforce, strong partnerships with EPPs are essential. The percentage of candidates of color enrolled in CT EPPs exceeds the 9.6% statewide percentage working across the state.

Connecticut Educator Preparation Program Providers are eager to build partnerships

Connecticut educator preparation providers (EPPs) are eager to build stronger relationships with districts and schools across the state in ways that are mutually beneficial. We encourage districts to expand and enhance existing partnerships with EPPs and to consider exploring the development of new partnerships. For those districts looking to get started, we encourage you to reach out to programs within your geographic region or contact our partners at The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Connecticut (AACTE-CT).

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Certification/Educator-Preparation-Providers-EPPs-and-Programs-in-Connecticut>

<https://aacte-ct.org/>