

# **GETTING STARTED: A protocol for the initial three-way meeting of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university field instructor**

## Context and Purpose

The "getting started" meeting is intended to lay the groundwork for productive and satisfying working relationships among the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the field instructor. The primary purpose of this three-way collaboration is to help the student teacher take best advantage of the special, situated, intensive learning opportunities that the field component of the student teaching term presents.

Student teaching makes complex demands on everyone involved, but especially on the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Student teachers are in a position of greater responsibility and greater exposure than at any previous point in their professional preparation. Cooperating teachers are ever mindful of the continued learning of their students and the well-being of the classroom community. Both student teacher and cooperating teacher are engaged in the examination of the process and practice that is crucial to learning and growing as a teacher.

The third member of the collaboration, the university field instructor, is also dedicated to helping the student teacher learn to productively examine her or his own practice. Field instructors observe, listen, and advise, question, and are questioned. They conduct weekly student teaching seminars, provide support and guidance, and are ultimately responsible for the evaluation of student teachers. Field instructors are responsible for keeping in mind the University's purposes, expectations, and goals for the teacher education program as a whole and for the student teaching experience in particular.

A degree of mutual trust and a high degree of mutual openness to dialogue are important to the success of this venture. The initial three-way meeting should be conducted so as to help establish these qualities.

In advance of the meeting:

- The cooperating teacher will have introduced the student teacher to the routines and activities of the classroom and directed the student teacher to read various core texts and curriculum materials.
- The field instructor and the student teacher will have met at least once to review the baseline self-assessment completed in December by the student teacher.
- The field instructor and cooperating teacher will confer before the meeting.
- The student teacher will be alerted to the plan for the meeting and her/his role in it.

## Structure

The meeting should provide both a substantive opportunity for the formation of these key professional/pedagogical relationships and the beginnings of a working agenda for the term. The following design is intended to help everyone focus on the educative purposes of the student teaching experience for the student teacher. In particular, the intentions are:

- To prompt student teachers to take significant responsibility for their own learning; and
- To assist cooperating teachers and field instructors to articulate the broad paths along which they and the program expect to foster the student teacher's learning and growth. These

"paths" or domains, outlined in # 3, below, (and detailed on pg. 3-4), therefore, specify major points of evaluation.

1. **The field instructor opens the meeting.** Briefly review the organization of the conversation and the time available.
2. **The field instructor initiates a conversation about the instructional cycles assignment.**
  - The field instructor gives an overview of the assignment and the responsibilities of each team member. Formal assignment sheets are distributed so that each team member has a written description of the assignment.
  - The student teacher and cooperating teacher discuss the possible assessments that are available or that could take place to support the assignment.
  - The meeting ends with each member of the team fully understanding how and when the instructional cycle will take place.

**The field instructor presents five domains for professional learning with a focus on how they apply to instructional cycles.**

- I. Planning, assessing, evaluating
- II. Knowing and representing subject matters
- III. Knowing and engaging students
- IV. Building classroom community
- V. Becoming a member of a profession

3. **The Unit Design and Instruction Component**

- Field instructor, cooperating teacher, and student teacher work to identify a curricular area around which the student teacher can develop a significant, in-depth unit. (see pg. 23)
- The field instructor reviews changes in the development and teaching of the unit plan with a focus on backward design and instructional cycles.
- Possible timelines are discussed and a general sense of how and when the unit will take place is agreed upon.

4. **The cooperating teacher and field instructor, with student teacher participation, establish priorities for the first several weeks.** The student teacher should, with the cooperating teacher's help and guidance, be getting to know:

- Classroom and school norms, expectations, policies and procedures (including those relating to student conduct and discipline, teacher conduct, and health and emergency expectations) (review program policies and procedures, (pg. 29 )
- Policies and procedures specific to student teaching (i.e., the student teacher shall not initiate contact with parents without prior approval of cooperating teacher);
- Building staff and faculty (including the principal);
- Students (i.e., by having lunch with small groups of students); and
- Key school curricular resources.
- Establish a semester calendar including host school breaks, university programs, etc.

5. **A beginning schedule is established.** This should include:

- a) Weekly "protected time" for the cooperating and student teachers to meet and talk in a focused and calm manner: This is a time for joint work on the often invisible (to the

novice) thinking that goes into teaching, as well as for strategic advice, problem solving, and so on:

- For example, this could be an occasion for a cooperating teacher to articulate and explicate specific instances of pedagogical decision making: to let the student teacher "inside" the cooperating teacher's head as s/he "walks through" the relevant understandings, beliefs, and purposes that inform a particular set of decisions (in the planning of a lesson or unit, for example, or in the conduct of a discussion).
  - Student teachers could be expected to bring questions to these meetings, both procedural and substantive (for example, "Why did you do that?" "What do you think that student understands and what makes you think so?" "Where are you headed with this lesson and why?").
  - The cooperating teacher may wish to establish or reiterate other aspects of the weekly schedule, e.g., arrival times, team meetings if applicable, etc.
- b) Field instructor's first observation visit and subsequent 'de-briefing': The field instructor should explain frequency and purposes of the observations and de-briefings (sometimes three-way, sometimes two-way, sometimes immediately after the fact, sometimes later) and what is expected of the student teacher in setting the context and helping to set the focus of observations (Some may wish to set a tentative schedule of observations for the whole term at this time).
- c) Weekly student teaching seminar: The field instructor should review the day and time of the seminar and briefly discuss the kinds of discussions and assignments it is likely to involve.
- d) Faculty meetings, professional development activities, etc.: The cooperating teacher should review these and tentative decisions should be made about the student teacher's participation in them.
6. **Closing.** The student teacher will follow-up with a brief email to the cooperating teacher and field instructor summarizing the plans, agreements, and issues identified as priorities during the meeting. The email will include specific dates and times that were agreed upon for the instructional cycles assignment.