

Cooperating Teacher Handbook

Teachers College, Columbia University
Office of Teacher Education & School-Based Support Services

2009-10



*A teacher's purpose is not to create students in his own image,
but to develop students who can create their own image.*

-Anonymous

The Office of Teacher Education & School-Based Support Services aims to provide information, support and resources to instructors and students engaged in Professional Education Programs that lead to initial and professional certification.

We invite you to visit us on the 4th floor of the library, Russell 400, call us at 212.678.3466, or email us at OTE@tc.edu with questions or concerns regarding student teaching and supervision materials and procedures, or other questions related to Professional Education at Teachers College. For specific program information, please contact the appropriate person indicated below.

Speak first to:	For questions about:	At:
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Patricia Velasco	Bilingual/Bicultural Education	212.678.6633
Peg Cummins	Blindness and Visual Impairment	212.678.3878
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Office of Teacher Education & School-Based Support Services	Student Teaching Records	212.678.3502/3466
Teachers College Registrar	Graduate Degree Applications	212.678.4050

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A Conceptual Framework for Professional Education at Teachers College

Consistent with the College's long tradition of serving the needs of urban and suburban schools in the United States and around the world, the vision and purpose of professional education at Teachers College is to establish and maintain programs of study, service, and research that prepare competent, caring, and qualified professional educators (teachers, counselors, psychologists, administrators, and others). This vision is based on three shared philosophical stances that underlie and infuse the work we do:

Inquiry stance: We are an inquiry-based and practice-oriented community. We and our students & graduates challenge assumptions and complacency and embrace a stance of inquiry toward the inter-related roles of learner, teacher, and leader in P-12 schools.

Curricular stance: Negotiating among multiple perspectives on culture, content, and context, our graduates strive to meet the needs of diverse learners, both students and other adults, in their school communities.

Social justice stance: Our graduates choose to collaborate across differences in and beyond their school communities. They demonstrate a commitment to social justice and to serving the world while imagining its possibilities.

The three philosophical stances provide the context for developing and assessing candidates' proficiencies based on professional, state, and institutional standards. There are five TC standards:

Standard 1: Inquirers and Reflective Practitioners:

Our candidates are inquirers/researchers who have breadth of knowledge and a variety of tools to ask questions about educational environments. They reflect on and continually evaluate the effects of their choices on others (children, families, and other professionals in the learning community).

Standard 2: Lifelong Learners: Our candidates are continually engaged in learning and research. They take responsibility for their professional growth and seek/create learning opportunities for themselves and others.

Standard 3: Learner-Centered Educators/Professionals:

Our candidates understand their subject matter/disciplines, learners and learning, and curriculum and teaching. They create learning experiences that foster development and achievement in all students.

Standard 4: Effective Collaborators: Our candidates actively participate in the community or communities of whom they are a part to support students' learning and well-being.

Standard 5: Advocates of Social Justice and Diversity:

Our candidates are familiar with legal, ethical, and policy issues. They provide leadership in advocating for children, families, and themselves in a variety of professional, political, and policy-making contexts.

The Student Teaching Experience

Informed by a strong focus on social justice, curriculum and inquiry, our mission is to prepare teachers who understand the political nature of schooling, are able to recognize and interrupt deficit views of children, and have the skills, knowledge and dispositions to advocate for all students so that each has access to the quality education and care she/he deserves.

However, learning to teach is much more than technical, i.e., a process of acquiring strategies and techniques. Instead, teaching to meet the complex needs presented by a diverse student population demands the ability to ask critical questions, to “invent” practice by learning from children and listening to them, and to operate from a stance characterized by capacity and possibility, not limitations and low expectations.

The student teaching experience provides preservice teachers the space and opportunity to learn how to ask important questions about teaching and learning, come to know children and adolescents by observing and interacting with them consistently over time, apply newly acquired knowledge, theories, strategies and models in a variety of contexts within and across classrooms, and experiment with, design and adapt practice according to learners’ needs.

As such, student teaching takes place in a wide variety of classroom settings located in an equally wide variety of schools including comprehensive public schools, alternative schools, schools within a school, theme or specialty schools, independent schools, urban and suburban schools and schools that are both large and small. Each student can expect to complete a minimum of two student teaching placements, each in a different grade level according to the requirements of the specific teaching certificate for which she or he is preparing. For example, if a student is working toward initial certification in childhood education--grades 1-6, one student teaching experience must be in grades 1-3, the other in grades 4-6. Students can also expect to be learning to teach in the discipline or subject area (English, mathematics, music, biology, etc.) for which they are seeking certification.

During the student teaching experience, preservice teachers are guided and instructed by two key individuals—the cooperating or mentor teacher, and the university supervisor. While both work collaboratively to support the growth and development of the student teacher, each assumes a very specific role.

Cooperating teachers serve as mentors, models and instructors to student teachers. By welcoming a novice into their classroom, they demonstrate their willingness to guide student teachers in planning and implementing curriculum, afford them many opportunities to develop their personal teaching style and full potential, encourage questions as well as open discussion and dialogue, monitor and assess the many aspects of each student teacher's growth, and challenge, re-direct, question and explain according to the needs of the preservice student.

Notes to the Cooperating Teacher

First, thank you for working with a student teacher from Teachers College. Your willingness to open your classroom to our institution and our students attests to your commitment to the teaching profession and underscores the seriousness with which you assume your role as a mentor and teacher educator. The learning-to-teach process is complex and demanding; deep learning on the part of student teachers depends on the rich opportunities you can provide them within your classroom to experiment, practice, apply, create, revise and question. Below are some suggestions, guidelines and basic information that we trust will support the important work you do with our students.

Welcoming the student teacher to your classroom and school

All of us who are teachers remember our own student teaching experiences and the many worries we had about our own authority, ability, and place in the classroom. To make a successful transition into the field placement, student teachers need support adjusting to the routines and norms of the classroom and school, developing relationships with students and colleagues, and establishing themselves as “real” teachers. Below are some ways you can help your student teacher enter and blend seamlessly into your classroom:

Talk to your students ahead of time about the second teacher who will be joining the class. Establish expectations for their behavior and interactions with this new teacher and answer questions they might have.

- Encourage your student teacher to learn the names and important background information of the students as quickly as possible. Perhaps the student teacher could also have a discussion with the class and share a little about her or himself.
- Be prepared to spend some time talking with your student teacher. Share your philosophy, talk about your teaching and working style, explain particular norms and conventions of practice that undergird your classroom but may be implicit and embedded, think aloud about the goals you have for your students that year. Encourage your student teacher to share in return...goals, fears, talents, previous experience, etc. Get to know one another.
- Introduce your student teacher to other faculty and personnel in the school.
- Provide a work area for your student teacher and a space for personal belongings.
- Acquaint your student teacher with curriculum materials, instructional supplies, teaching aids, and other available equipment or technology.
- Articulate the rules, regulations and practices of the school; share the school’s mission, as well as the services and programs that are provided.
- Add the student teacher’s name to the classroom door.
- Don’t forget to underscore confidentiality issues.

Gathering information and establishing channels of communication

- Exchange phone numbers and email addresses; discuss when and how you will communicate with one another outside school hours.
- Review program documents and student teaching guidelines together.
- Schedule at least one time a week when you both can meet to plan together and talk about what has been—and will be—going on in the classroom.
- Meet with your student teacher’s college supervisor as early in the term as possible and plan ahead for three-way conferences when you, the supervisor and the student teacher can discuss goals, needs and progress.

Planning for your student teacher's growth and development over time

Learning to teach is not only complex, but should be deliberate and gradual. Think about how you will scaffold your student teacher's learning and development over time so that she or he can gradually assume more and more responsibility and gain independence as a teacher. At the beginning of the experience, observation is particularly important so that student teachers learn to see classrooms and learners with new and ever more-informed eyes. Guide your student teacher to assume responsibilities in measured increments—beginning first perhaps by working one-to-one with students, then with small groups, on to larger groups or the whole class, moving on to the design and implementation of instructional sequences and unit plans and culminating in full or major responsibility for day-to-day teaching and long term/overall planning.

As you structure learning opportunities for your student teacher, consider your own role and how you will guide and assess her/his progress. Observe your student teacher regularly and offer feedback and suggestions designed to help him/her improve, reconsider, more deeply understand or revise practice. Share your own pedagogical decision-making with your student teacher so she/he can benefit from your “thinking” aloud. Finally, remain open to your student teacher's ideas and create spaces for your student teacher to experiment with possibilities.

Inducting your student teacher into the teaching profession

There are many aspects of becoming a teacher that extend beyond direct interaction with and instruction of students. Think about knowledge, skills and experiences your student teacher will need to participate fully and productively in the school and the profession. For example, you may consider sharing assessment and record keeping techniques, involving your student teacher in grade/department/school meetings, or, when appropriate, including your student teacher in conferences with parents. You may also want to encourage your student teacher to attend after-school activities or events, or to become familiar with district policies, learning standards and specific guidelines surrounding the care and safety of students.

Assessing teaching readiness and fit

Any concerns you have about your student teacher's teaching abilities and practice should always be shared with candor and care with your student teacher and the college supervisor. Often, timely intervention, specific feedback and additional support will help strengthen student teachers' practice. In those cases where intervention and support cannot compensate for a poor match between the student and teaching, then the student teacher can be counseled (by faculty and the college supervisor, but with your insight and help) to consider options other than teaching that may be more suited to her/his skills and temperament. While these decisions are always difficult, they are our professional responsibility.

Teacher quality is one of the most critical issues currently being discussed both within and outside the profession. Ensuring teacher quality is the most significant responsibility you assume as a cooperating teacher. In order to confidently recommend a student teacher for certification, we depend on your intimate knowledge of your student teacher and your assessment of their practice. Preparing for this important decision requires careful observation, descriptive detail and documentation. Balancing support with evaluation is always challenging. Yet, learning to teach well requires that both are in place. Ultimately, you want to be sure that your assessment is fair but rigorous and that all student teachers are held to the highest standards of teaching quality.

Guidelines for Communicating with Student Teachers

1. Focus feedback on behavior rather than the person.

It is important that we refer to what a person does in the classroom rather than a personal trait. This focus on behavior further implies that we use adverbs (which relate to actions) rather than adjectives (which relate to qualities) when referring to a person. Thus, we might say a person "talked considerably in this meeting" rather than that this person is "a loudmouth."

2. Focus feedback on observations rather than inferences.

Observations refer to what we can see or hear in the behavior of another person, while inferences refer to our interpretation of the behavior (as in "you were defensive"). The sharing of inferences or conclusions may be valuable, but it is important that they be so identified.

3. Focus feedback on description rather than judgment.

The effort to describe represents a process for reporting what occurred, while judgment refers to an evaluation in terms of good or bad, right or wrong. The judgments arise out of a personal frame of reference or value grid, whereas description represents more neutral reporting.

4. Focus feedback on the sharing of ideas and information rather than on giving advice.

By sharing ideas and information we leave the receivers free to decide for themselves in the light of their own goals, in a particular situation at a particular time how to use the ideas and information. When we give advice, we tell them what to do with the information, and in that sense we take away the freedom to determine the most appropriate course of action as well as reducing their responsibility for their own behavior.

5. Focus feedback on exploration of alternatives rather than answers or solutions.

The more we can focus on a variety of procedures and means for the attainment of a particular goal, the less likely we are to accept prematurely a particular answer or solution which may or may not fit a particular problem.

Tuition Exemption Information

What does a cooperating teacher (CT) receive for working with a student teacher (ST)?

Tuition exemption vouchers are provided through the Office of Teacher Education (OTE) ranging from 2-3 credits depending on the student teacher's program of study. Vouchers are valid for four semesters and are non-transferable. Please see Appendix B for the procedures for tuition exemption.

When can I start to use the voucher?

Letters are sent out by OTE at the end of the semester in which the ST worked with the CT upon submission of two forms called the Record of Hours and the Grid of Hours by the student teacher to OTE. Vouchers are mailed to the school unless an alternate address is indicated on the "Cooperating Teacher Questionnaire". Cooperating teachers can also call 212-678-3466 or email ote@tc.edu with a different address.

How long is a voucher good for?

A voucher is valid for the four semesters immediately following the semester in which a student teacher was at the school. For example, a CT who works with a ST in the Fall of 2006 will get a voucher that can be used for a class at TC during Spring 2007, Summer 2007, Fall 2007, or Spring 2008.

What can the voucher be used for?

Teachers College awards tuition exemption for ONE course (not to exceed 3 credits) at TC. The voucher cannot be used in other faculties of Columbia i.e. Barnard, Columbia University...

The tuition exemption is not applicable to fee-based course offerings such as private music lessons and similar tutorial offerings. The Office of the Registrar can be consulted for more information at 212-678-4050.

Who can I contact with questions or concerns?

Please feel free to contact the Office of Teacher Education at 212-678-3466 or at ote@tc.edu.

What other types of professional development opportunities are available for CTs?

Student teaching colloquiums are an excellent way to meet other cooperating teachers and stay up to date on current educational trends. We also offer opportunities for teachers to facilitate workshops at TC on various topics related to education. Please contact Julia Yu at 212-678-3978 or at yu@tc.edu if you are interested in running a workshop or attending one.

Appendix A: Procedures for Tuition Exemption

The following steps must be taken during specified dates of registration at the beginning of each semester to prevent delays in the processing of paperwork.

Step 1: Apply for non-degree status at the Office of Admissions online or on paper

- a) Complete a Non-Degree Student Application
- b) Submit Bachelor's degree transcript(s)
- c) Pay \$65 application fee

Important Note: Applications submitted at a time other than the specified registration dates will delay processing for 2-4 weeks

If you have already applied as a non-degree student (for continuing students), please skip to Step 2.

Step 2: Register for a class with the Office of the Registrar via Internet or phone

Please check for specific instructions at <http://www.tc.edu/registrar/>. You will need a pin number, which will be given to you by the Office of the Registrar. You must know all pertinent information for registering such as course number, course title, instructor, CRN number, etc. Please be sure to acquire a print out of your course schedule, tuition, and fees.

Step 3: Email, fax, mail, or drop off a "Cooperating Teacher Voucher Request Form"

Email: ote@tc.edu

Fax: 212.678.3153

Mail: Office of Teacher Education, 525 West 120 Street, Box 97, New York, NY 10027

Drop off: Russell Hall, Room 400 (4th floor of the Teachers College Gottesman Libraries)

The Office of Teacher Ed will hand deliver the tuition exemption form to the Office of Student Accounts in 133 Thompson within 2-5 business days.

The semesterly college fee is covered with the voucher. Any additional tuition credits and course fees (i.e., materials fees) not covered by the tuition exemption is the responsibility of the person utilizing the voucher.

Note: Tuition vouchers are not transferable. Please see page 9 for more information.

APPENDIX B: COOPERATING TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

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Directions: Please complete and 1) fax to 212-678-3153 OR 2) return to the student teacher OR 3) email to OTE@tc.edu OR 4) mail to Office of Teacher Education, Box 97, 525 West 120 Street, NY, NY 10027. Please submit this form by Oct. 1 for fall, Feb. 1 for spring, June 1 or Aug. 1 for Summer Sessions. Thank you!

IMPORTANT NOTE: This survey needs to be completed only once while serving as a cooperating teacher.

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Email: _____ School _____
 Address where you would like voucher letter sent: _____

1. Area of Certification: _____

2. Please identify the two most current Pre-K-12 teaching experiences in public or non-public schools and the corresponding subject area and grade level:

Subject	Grade Level	Years of Experience

3. Total Number of Years of Teaching Experience: ____

4. Please list valid teaching certificates, licenses, or credentials.

Type of Certificate or License or Credential	Subject Area	Grade Range	Issuing State

5. Please indicate the number of years you have been a cooperating teacher and the institution for which you have served in this capacity.

Institution	Years of Experience

6. 1. Please indicate the highest degree earned and the name of the institution where the degree was conferred.

Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree Institution: _____

7. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program? If yes, please indicate the degree program and institution.

Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctoral Degree Institution: _____

8. Would you be interested in conducting a presentation for other cooperating teachers and/or student teachers at Teachers College? Circle one: Yes / No

Thank you!
 Your support of Teachers College student teachers is very much appreciated!

Appendix C: Student Teacher Questionnaire #1

Name:

Best Phone Number:

Alternate Phone Number:

Email:

Name of Field Supervisor:

Previous experience in classrooms (if any):

What days and times will you be in our classroom?

What are you most looking forward to doing during your student teaching placement?

What do you foresee as possible challenges for you as a teacher?

What are 3 goals that you have for yourself during this semester? What are yours plan toward meeting these goals?

Appendix D: Student Teacher Questionnaire #2

What do you know about this grade level? Are there any questions/concerns you have about working with students at this age level?

What experience do you have with differentiating instruction? Briefly describe any experience or knowledge you have in this area.

What do you feel are some of your strengths as a professional? What are some areas you wish to grow (time management, classroom management, creativity, dependability, taking on new initiatives, etc.)?

What experience/interest do you have in utilizing technology in the classroom?

What are some areas/ways that you would like for me to support you?

Appendix E: Student Teaching Guidelines and Benchmarks

Upon suggestions from cooperating teachers, we have provided a general guide to inform your work with student teachers in addition to the recommendations on page 6 of this handbook. Please note that responsibilities and expectations may differ by program. More detailed information may be available from program specific handbooks or student teaching coordinators.

Week 1-2 and beyond: Student teachers will be observers

- Allow the student teacher (ST) to observe in your classroom (and in the classrooms of other teachers, wherever appropriate)
- Allow for opportunities for the student to become acquainted with the institution, its resources and students
- Share materials that provide insight into the scope and sequence of the curriculum
- Set up a weekly meeting time with your ST to discuss observations and lessons
- Allow ST to assist with daily routines wherever appropriate and possible

Week 2-5 and beyond: Student teachers will be curriculum planners and classroom assistants

- Set aside time to discuss curriculum development and planning
- Provide opportunities for ST to participate/lead small group discussions/activities
- Allow ST to assess and respond to student work
- 1st semester: ST should secure and prepare for an independent teaching period
- 2nd semester: ST should secure and prepare to take on at least 2 of coop's classes

Week 6 and beyond: Student teachers are expected to be leaders and instructors

- ST should conduct research and write lesson and unit plans
- ST are expected to use formative and diagnostic methods of evaluation to measure student improvement
- Provide minimal assistance with management of the classroom and help them establish a greater presence in the classroom
- 1st semester: ST should be responsible for at least one class until the end of the placement
- 2nd semester: ST should be responsible for at least two classes until the end of the placement

IMPORTANT NYS LAW

THE COOP TEACHER MUST BE PRESENT IN THE ROOM AT ALL TIMES. THE ONLY EXCEPTION OCCURS IF THE STUDENT TEACHER HOLDS A SUBSTITUTE LICENSE.