



Tift College of Education:
Cooperating Teacher Handbook
for Pre-Practicum

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter.....	3
Cooperating Teacher Responsibilities	5
Helpful Information for Cooperating Teachers	6
Office of Field Placement Staff	7

Welcome Letter

Dear Cooperating Teacher,

Mercer University appreciates the willingness of classroom teachers to work with our prospective teachers. We are well aware that their classroom experience in the “real” world of teaching makes an invaluable contribution to their preparation for teaching. Our desire is that their time with you be mutually beneficial.

The primary purpose of this field experience is **observation**. We hope this field experience will provide opportunities for our students to observe certain aspects of child development, to observe how differences in child development are accommodated, to observe professional teachers in the daily routine of the school, to observe different teaching styles and strategies, and to enhance their interpersonal and professional skills in the school setting.

In order to enhance further the usefulness of the student assigned to you and to make the observation experience more meaningful, we would like to offer the following suggestions* from which you may wish to draw ideas. These suggestions are not meant to be limiting; they are only suggestions. Please feel free to facilitate your student’s professional development as you deem best.

**The student should receive directions from you in conducting these activities*

- Work on bulletin boards
- Go over homework or test papers
- Tutor individual students
- Work with small groups
- Read stories
- Direct games and activities

As the classroom teacher, you certainly have the best opportunities for observation and evaluation. Based on your experiences throughout the semester, please be sure to share your feedback with the student on areas of strength and areas of growth.

The **University Supervisor** assigned to your field experience student will contact you before the start of placement by e-mail. If you would prefer a phone call, please reach out to them with your contact information. Please ask any questions and express any concerns that you have about the program or about the student who has been assigned to you. It is our goal to work with you as closely as we can to make the field experience as meaningful as possible. If you need the

University Supervisor to come to the school for any reason, please do not hesitate to call him/her or to contact him/her by e-mail with that request.

Again, let me express the appreciation of the entire Tift faculty to you, to your principal, and to all who are involved in the important task of preparing teachers. Please feel free to contact me at any point during the semester. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

The Office of Field Placement

Tift College of Education; Mercer University

TiftFieldPlacement@mercer.edu

Cooperating Teacher Responsibilities

Listed below are the primary responsibilities when working with a Pre-Practicum (Observation) student:

- Work with the Teacher Candidate to plan the semester experience. (i.e., what days and times will the candidate be in the classroom?)
 - All Pre-Practicum courses are between **24 and 35 hours** of time in the classroom over the semester. Some courses are 8 weeks long while others are 16 weeks. Your Teacher Candidate and University Supervisor will inform you of the specific hour and week requirements for the course.
- Work with the Teacher Candidate and have him or her assist you with your daily responsibilities.
- Sign the Teacher Candidate's Time Log each week and at the end of the experience.
- Meet with the Teacher Candidate to share and discuss strengths and weaknesses throughout their experience.
- At the first sign of trouble, contact the University Supervisor.
- Provide the Teacher Candidate with as many authentic opportunities to engage as possible.

The Cooperating Teacher or another school employee, including a substitute teacher, **must be present at all times** when the Teacher Candidate is in the presence of children inside or outside the classroom.

In addition to supporting all Teacher Candidate requirements listed above, we ask that all Cooperating Teachers:

- Build a trusting and supportive relationship with the Teacher Candidate and consistently provide helpful and encouraging feedback to candidates.
- Talk openly and honestly with the candidate when discussing strengths and weaknesses.

Helpful Information for Cooperating Teachers

Language that Mercer University uses for field placement:

- OFP – The Office of Field Placement
- TC – Teacher Candidate
- CT – Cooperating Teacher (you!)
- US – University Supervisor

All Mercer University **Teacher Candidates** have been required to adhere to the following:

- At the first sign of an issue or potential problem, please contact the University Supervisor.
- Observe the schedule/hours planned with the CT at the beginning of the experience.
- Adhere to the same holiday schedule as the system to which the candidate is assigned.
- Sign in at the front office and wear a Mercer nametag at all times.
 - Students who do not have a name tag will receive one within the first month of the semester.
- Contact the CT before all absences. The candidate is expected to make up all missed days by the end of the experience.
- May NOT serve as a substitute teacher and may NOT administer standardized tests. The candidate may work with a substitute for the CT when the CT must be absent.
- Dress professionally at all times. No jeans, sweatpants, or leggings may be worn, even on days where teachers may wear jeans. Candidates may wear school t-shirts on specified days if teachers wear t-shirts on certain days.
- Be present with a school employee at all times when in the presence of children inside or outside the classroom.

Teacher Candidates will complete journal reflections submitted to their University Supervisors where they will reflect on observations of:

- Certain aspects of child development
- Classroom community and climate
- Critical incidents (something outside of the normal routine/unexpected)
- How differences in child development are accommodated
- Professional teachers in the daily routine of the school
- Different teaching styles and strategies
- Enhancing interpersonal and professional skills in the school setting

For further information and resources:

[Cooperating Teachers - College of Education](#)

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