

Tufts University  
Department of Child Development  
Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Program

## **Responsibilities of the University Supervisor**

### **Liaison**

The University Supervisor plays a very important role in supporting the development of a Student Teacher. University Supervisors serve as a liaison between the school and the University and as a resource to both the Student Teacher and the Supervising Practitioner (cooperating teacher). They provide the student a third party with whom to process the variety of experiences they have during student teaching. Student teaching can be an emotionally laden experience, often the first opportunity for the student to test their competence outside of an academic setting. The University Supervisor is in a position to focus directly on the student's needs in a way that is unrealistic to expect from the Supervising Practitioner who is also responsible for a group of children.

### **Communication**

As a liaison between the Student Teacher and Supervising Practitioner, and between the school and the university, the University Supervisor's primary responsibility is to facilitate communication. The success of the student teaching experience depends to a great extent on the quality of the relationships developed among all of the key partners—you, as the University Supervisor; the Student Teacher; the Supervising Practitioner; and the Professional Development Coordinator at the university (who is also the instructor for the seminar that accompanies student teaching). Developing these relationships requires open and timely communication and a shared mutual commitment on the part of all involved. The University Supervisor is in the best position to monitor these relationships to ensure that the student teaching experience helps the Student Teacher grow to their fullest potential.

### **Supporting the Student Teacher's Relationship with their Supervising Practitioner**

The primary student teaching relationship is between the Student Teacher and the Supervising Practitioner. We suggest that the University Supervisor check in frequently with both the student and the Supervising Practitioner to be sure that both are comfortable with the way the placement is progressing and that they both feel they are able to express their needs in an honest and productive manner. We recommend that the University Supervisor touch base with the Supervising Practitioner in person or by phone every two weeks so that concerns can be dealt with in a timely manner.

We have asked the Supervising Practitioner to schedule a weekly meeting with the Student Teacher for a minimum of half an hour. Daily exchanges between the Student and the Supervising Practitioner are important to ensure the smooth functioning of the classroom, but they do not replace scheduled times set aside to conference when there are no other demands on the Supervising Practitioner's time. The University Supervisor can assist both the student and the Supervising practitioner in making the most of these scheduled meetings. Supervising

Practitioners are also encouraged to model reflective practice for students and to provide students with constructive feedback. At times it may be important for the University Supervisor to help the student to understand and process this feedback in the context of their other learning and prior experiences.

### **Meeting, Calling and Observing Student Teachers**

The University Supervisor also has regular and on-going contact with the Student Teacher. University Supervisors are expected to meet face-to-face with the Student Teacher every other week and to touch base with the student by phone on alternate weeks. We recommend that the University Supervisor schedule these face-to-face meetings right at the beginning of the semester, establishing a time and location that is mutually convenient and conducive to conversations. In addition, University Supervisors should plan on observing the student once or twice in the first half of the semester and once or twice in the second half of the semester. You may ask the student to send you written plans for the learning encounter, lesson, or activity you will be observing ahead of time. Try to schedule your observations at a time when the student is able to meet with you to debrief immediately following the observation. These observations and de-briefing sessions serve as your face-to-face meeting for that week. You may want to plan one of your observations for the student's "take over" week at the end of the semester when the Supervising Practitioner is out of the room; students often look forward to having the University Supervisor observe some aspect of this important culminating experience.

### **Reading and Responding to Student's Weekly Journals**

You will also be in weekly contact with the Student Teacher through their journal. The weekly journal is an integral component of the student teaching experience. It serves as a narrative record of the experience as well as a vehicle to promote reflective practice, goal-setting, and professional growth. At the beginning of the semester, students identify personal goals for their own growth and the journal allows you to monitor the student's progress relative to these goals and the state standards (see below) as the semester progresses. In their weekly journal entry students will describe briefly the classroom activities they experienced during the past week and then write a personal reflection on these experiences.

Students will e-mail you a journal entry at the end of each week and you will respond with written comments in a timely manner. Your responses may take the form of provocations or questions that the student will be expected to address in the subsequent journal. Your comments may be very brief on weeks when you have a scheduled face-to-face meeting and more elaborate on alternate weeks. Even if you are in regular face-to-face and phone contact with the student, however, we encourage you to provide written responses to each entry. In some cases you may use your response as a way to summarize points that you have discussed on the phone or by e-mail. The journal provides an important written record of the student teaching experience for both you and the Student Teacher. University Supervisors and students frequently refer back to previous journal entries and responses. It is often helpful to look back at earlier journal entries and responses to appreciate the extent of the student's growth or to trace the origins of lingering issues or concerns.

## **Reviewing other Assignments**

As a University Supervisor you will also read and provide feedback on the student's learning encounters (lesson plans) and plans for their "take-over" week. These assignments vary each semester depending on the needs of the students and you will work closely with the Professional Development Coordinator to set appropriate expectations for the student's work.

## **Monitoring and Mediating**

Students are expected to adapt themselves to the philosophy and demands of their placement. They have been advised to observe and absorb the nature of the classroom initially, but to quickly take as much initiative as you and the Supervising Practitioner indicate is appropriate. The Supervising Practitioner has the primary responsibility for guiding the student in taking on increasing responsibility for the various teaching roles in the classroom. Your role, as a University Supervisor, will be to monitor the experience to ensure that the expectations for the student are appropriate, not overly ambitious or cautious, and to mediate in cases where you feel an adjustment is necessary. See [Guiding Student Teachers towards Increased Responsibility](#) for recommendations on how to pace increasing expectations for students.

Student Teaching is an emotionally laden experience for the student as well as for the Supervising Practitioner. Often students are eager to try out what they have been learning and feel that student teaching is finally their opportunity. They may need to be reminded that they can learn a great deal from the experience and expertise of their Supervising Practitioner. Supervising Practitioners, on the other hand, may be eager for the help that an enthusiastic and energetic student can provide, but may be less comfortable allowing students autonomy in the classroom. The Supervising Practitioner quite appropriately has the ultimate responsibility for the children. There is therefore, a dynamic tension inherent in the student teaching arrangement. Frequent and pro-active communication on the part of the University Supervisor can typically prevent this tension from impacting the quality of the experience. Despite our best efforts, however, misunderstandings can occur and in these situations the University Supervisor can provide you with help problem-solving and mediating.

## **3-Way Meetings**

Three times during the semester you will meet with the Student Teacher and the Supervising Practitioner – at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. These meetings are required as part of the State process and you should schedule them as soon as possible before your calendars fill up.

1. The first 3-way meeting is an opportunity for you to introduce yourself and get to know the classroom and teacher. At that meeting you will review the procedures and expectations for the semester and answer any questions.
2. The second 3-way meeting provides an opportunity to review the mid-semester evaluation and establish goals for the remainder of the semester.
3. The final evaluation is shared at the third, and final, 3-way meeting.

## **Evaluation**

State Standards: As a University Supervisor you will be asked at the end of the semester to document that the student has met the 5 standards identified by the Massachusetts Department of Education:

1. Plans Curriculum and Instruction
2. Delivers Effective Instruction
3. Manages Classroom Climate and Operation
4. Promotes Equity
5. Meets Professional Responsibilities

These standards will form the goals that the student will be working towards over the course of the semester.

Mid-semester and End-of-Semester Evaluations: In addition to providing the student on-going written and verbal feedback about their performance relative to these standards, you will complete a mid-semester evaluation and an end-of-semester evaluation. We have developed a rubric to assist you in rating the student on each of these standards. The Supervising Practitioner will also be evaluating the student and you may choose to work together on your evaluations.

At the end of the semester you and the Supervising Practitioner will sign off on the Pre-service Performance Assessment (PPA) form indicating that the student has successfully met each of these standards. This form goes to the Massachusetts Department of Education and enables the student to obtain a teaching license.

Grading: The student's final grade for Student Teaching is assigned by the Professional Development Coordinator in collaboration with the University Supervisor. All of the University Supervisors will meet together at mid-semester to assign students a mid-term grade and again at the end of the semester to assign final grades.

Samples of the mid-semester and final evaluation forms along with the rubric are included in your orientation packet. We will send you these materials electronically as you need them.

## **Stipend and travel expenses**

In appreciation for your work with a Tufts student you will receive a stipend for each student. You may also submit travel expenses to the staff assistant, Rita Bartolomeu, for reimbursement.

## **Finally**

It is our hope that you will find, as we do, that working with students is a wonderful opportunity for professional growth. With that in mind, don't hesitate to call on us with any questions, concerns, or simply to process this experience -- we will all benefit.

**Thank you for your role in preparing the next generation of teachers for our children!**