

# Colorado State University

## Responsibilities of the Cooperating Teacher

The role of the Cooperating Teacher is complex and of the utmost importance in this learning to teach process. The Cooperating Teacher is, for this period of time, the on-site teacher educator. You will fill a number of roles: mentor, role model, guide, advisor, and friend.

The most important consideration in this student teaching program is for the students in your classroom. It is also our belief that student teaching should be a high quality learning experience for the student teacher, not a survival exercise. To these two ends, we offer the following suggestions.

Cooperating teachers are paid a small honorarium for working with a student teacher. (This payment is taxable income; therefore CSU requires that a W-9 form be on file for each Cooperating Teacher. Once a W-9 form is on file with the University, new forms do not need to be completed for subsequent semesters.) Honoraria are not funded from the special course fee for student teaching. Funds are resourced from resident instruction allocations provided in the School of Education's regular budget. Payments vary due to the length of the student placement--- 8 weeks, 15 weeks, or 16 weeks. Terms vary by endorsement areas. Another determinant is whether one or more Cooperating Teachers are working with a given student teachers. For a 15-week placement, the sum is \$125. If a student has more than one Cooperating Teacher, the individual payment will be split among the Cooperating Teachers. For 8-week placements, the honorarium is \$75.00. In a few instances this amount is further sub-divided by the number of Cooperating Teachers involved.

Colorado Department of Education and/or CSU Continuing Education credit is available for teachers who work with a student teacher. Credit forms are provided at the end of this handbook. We are proud of the many exemplary professionals who work with our teacher candidates. They deserve utmost respect and honor for their contribution to the teacher education process.

## Suggestions for Cooperating Teachers

### Orientation

Consider working with the student teacher as a co-teacher. Team planning and team teaching can be effective ways to model sound techniques and better guarantee a quality experience for all involved.

1. Prior to the arrival of the student teacher, prepare your students for his/her arrival.

- Introduce the student teacher as a co-teacher for the semester. This helps develop early perceptions of the student teacher as a responsible member of the faculty.
  - Tell them something about their new teacher and of changes that will be occurring as a result.
2. Help create a feeling of welcome for the student teacher.
- Set up a space for him/her, including a desk.
  - Obtain a school handbook for the student teacher.
  - Introduce him/her to other members of the staff.
  - Take him/her on a tour of the school site; explain the schedules, bells, routines, administrative regulations, paperwork, and inside workings of the department.
  - Share information about the school discipline policies.
3. Introduce the student teacher to the non-teaching responsibilities of teachers.
- Duties: lunch room, hall supervision, etc.
  - Meetings: faculty, team, curriculum, etc.
  - Parent contacts: open house, progress reports, telephone calls.
  - Others: co-curricular activities, school dances, budgeting and ordering, inventory, etc.

#### Psychological support

- Get to know the student teacher well enough so you can have insights into their strengths, their anxieties, their needs.
- Learn about and share the appropriate policies and legalities that will help the student teacher meet these professional obligations.
- Be a good listener. Be available so the student teacher can count on you.
- Let the student teacher know that you will be there to rescue if needed.

#### Instructional and curricular advice

- Obtain copies of necessary texts, curriculum guides, and materials for the student teacher.
- Share your plans, files, and insights.
- Assist the student teacher in the development of an effective classroom management plan.
- Help the student teacher identify other teachers who can provide enrichment ideas.
- Participate in discussions around instruction and curriculum.
- Encourage participation in department and professional meetings.
- Support and insist on good planning.

### Modeling

- Although we don't want to develop a clone of you, there is much to be learned from observing a master teacher teach.
- A demonstration can often be more effective than a conversation.
- Don't hesitate to step in and show what you have found to be effective.
- Encourage the student teacher to observe other teachers.

### Observation and feedback

- Cooperating teachers who hand over the class and leave the room are not able to provide the kind of on-going and progressive feedback that is the greatest benefit of the student teaching experience. Spend lots of time in the classroom.
- Use multiple approaches to obtain objective classroom data. The student teacher can benefit greatly from analyzing classroom events and self-correcting based on objective data rather than subjective opinions. (See Suggested References, below)
- Keep a notebook of comments, commendations, and suggestions on a daily and/or weekly basis. (An excellent way to document your supervision.)
- Hold quick conferences between classes for feedback, for support, and for immediate constructive suggestions.
- Make note of things the student teacher is doing well.
- Consider team teaching.

- Schedule weekly sit-down conferences for feedback and planning.
- Constructive suggestions for improvement made early in the semester allow time for the student teacher to develop good teaching skills.

### Assessment

- With good documentation and record keeping, you will be well prepared to provide substantive, ongoing assessments of the student teacher's progress.
- During the 15 weeks of student teaching, the Cooperating Teacher does at least 4 formal observations. In 8-week student teacher assignments, Cooperating Teachers do at least 2 observations (per assignment).
- The most important assessments are those you do on a daily or weekly basis, when the teacher candidate is provided with timely feedback.
- Note also that you are still ultimately responsible for the evaluation of your own students.
- Provide input and comments to the University Supervisor for Final Evaluation Form
- Write a letter of recommendation.

### Suggestions for the evaluation and grading of student teachers

- Use statements of fact rather than opinion, and objective rather than subjective descriptions of the student teacher's behaviors.
- Limit information to that which is relevant to or affects the student's performance in the classroom and school.
- Avoid making any public statements about the student's deficiencies.
- Avoid any personal behavior or statements suggesting malice or intent to harm.
- Convey, by behavior and writing, a concern both for the student's welfare and the school's welfare, limiting the likelihood of "bad faith or ill will" charges.
- Provide concrete (written) feedback of observed behaviors and suggestions for improvement.

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[www.stepp.caahs.colostate.edu](http://www.stepp.caahs.colostate.edu)  
for more details.