



Prairie View A&M University
Whitlowe R. Green College of Education

ROLE OF THE COOPERATING TEACHER

The cooperating teacher is the most important person in the growth and success of the student teacher. The cooperating teacher must participate in pre-service training for supervising student teachers. The responsibilities of area or grade chairs may be too great for them to have the time necessary to train a student teacher; therefore, a master teacher is needed. The cooperating teacher must have three or more years teaching experiences in an accredited public school classroom at the level and/or in the major/ specialization area in which he or she assumes responsibilities.

The following guidelines must be considered when selecting cooperating teachers:

- * Have at least three years teaching experience and is a state certified Teacher in the specialization of major area in which you service (Documentation required).
- * Be willing to train a Student Teacher.
- * Teach the same content area or grade level in which the student teacher is prepared.
- * Be competent in subject area, delivery, planning, management, and student assignment.
- * Be a professional leader and good role model.
- * Be a person without team leader or grade chair responsibilities.
- * Be willing to attend required university training.

The success of the Student Teaching Program and the quality of the experiences of the student teacher depend largely upon the understanding, assistance, guidance, and enthusiasm of the cooperating teacher. More specifically, the cooperating teacher has the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of a novice teacher, and of contributing to the continuous success and improvement of the Teacher Education Program.

The role of the cooperating teacher can be divided into the following general categories: (1) preparing prior to the arrival of the student teacher; (2) serving as an instructor; (3) working as a team; (4) providing a good motivational atmosphere through effective orientation; (5) arranging for professional growth through directed observation and participation in classroom activities; (6) promoting growth through demonstration teaching and modeling; (7) guiding the planning for teaching; (8) providing assistance in developing teaching and evaluation techniques; and (9) promoting growth through continuous adjustment, feedback, and cooperative evaluation.

Preparing for the Student Teacher Prior to His/Her Arrival

A student teacher should begin each day's teaching assignment with a keen desire to succeed. This desire may be enhanced or diminished during the early phases of the student teaching experience. Careful preparation on the part of the cooperating teacher prior to the arrival of the student teacher is most important.

The cooperating teacher should arrange to meet with the student teacher a few days prior to the first teaching day. Such a meeting should help the student teacher get acquainted with the cooperating teacher in a relaxed, less-pressured environment.

The student teacher's information sheet should be given to the cooperating teacher by the student teacher upon reporting for the first day of student teaching.

At this meeting the cooperating teacher and the student teacher should confer about such items as the student teacher's college preparation, major and teaching specialization, special interests, and the preparation and planning expected of the student teacher by the cooperating teacher. The student teacher should be given curriculum materials and resources used and shown areas of instruction to be covered.

At the same meeting the cooperating teacher should volunteer information on his or her educational background, interests and talents, philosophy of education and other general information that would help the student teacher better understand the teaching situation in a more realistic manner.

Working as a Team

Since working with a student teacher differs from working independently in a classroom, it is necessary that the cooperating teacher plan to work with the student teacher by carefully monitoring the student teacher's performance. The following suggestions will aid in cooperative teamwork.

1. Plan to work cooperatively with the student teacher from the beginning.
2. Plan to have the student teacher work with you in preparing and organizing teaching materials.
3. Plan to work with the student teacher in the best interest of the pupils.
4. Plan to have many conferences with the student teacher, since to function as an efficient teaching team, you and the student teacher must keep well informed as to each other's ideas, criticisms, and problems.
5. Plan to have conferences in which the student teacher, the university supervisor, and you, the cooperating teacher, can share information and discuss the student teacher's performance.
6. Inform the student teacher regarding school policies and activities, and prepare to share responsibilities concerning these policies and activities with the student teacher. It is important that the student teacher become aware of all phases of the teaching profession; including such things as cafeteria, bus, and other duties, the use of the teacher's lounge, keeping attendance records, as well as other duties and responsibilities.
7. Prepare the pupils for a new personality and a "team" of teachers prior to the arrival of the student teacher.

Providing a Good Motivational Atmosphere Through Effective Orientation

The following suggestions should help to maintain a good motivational atmosphere for the student teacher. More important than a list of suggestions for providing a good motivational atmosphere are ENTHUSIASM and INTEREST on the part of the cooperating teacher. A high degree of motivation is likely to be maintained if the student teacher feels the cooperating teacher is enthusiastic about assuming the role of a cooperating teacher, and is genuinely interested in the student as a person and as a developing teacher. The following suggestions will help to maintain a good motivational atmosphere for the student teacher.

1. Arrange an introductory conference. You may want to discuss personal backgrounds, school policies, objectives, and classroom procedures.
2. Familiarize the student teacher with the school plant (library, classrooms, lunchroom, lounge, restrooms, offices, parking areas, fire exit procedures,

workroom, media center, audio-visual materials and equipment that is available).

3. Arrange for the student teacher to meet the principal.
4. Introduce the student teacher to team members and other teachers and personnel.
5. Discuss the student teacher's responsibilities and the method of reporting when absent (exchange home telephone numbers).
6. Introduce the student teacher to the class. Explain to the class the responsibilities of the student teacher.

Arranging for Professional Growth Through Directed Observation and Participation in Classroom Activities

An important phase of the student teaching experience is a combination of two specific skills: directed observation and participation. These two skills involve the act of perceiving certain predetermined activities for a specific reason or purpose. The following suggestions will aid in directing observation and participation.

1. Generally allow one to two weeks of observation time, gradually giving the student teacher more responsibility for actual teaching tasks.

Give the student teacher guidance before he/she is allowed to take over the teaching of any class. Guidance may be provided by allowing the student teacher the opportunity to aid in the presentation of direct instruction or class discussions, to work with small groups, to set up demonstrations, etc. Such experiences also provide an opportunity for both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher to access teaching strengths and weaknesses.
2. Suggest that the student teacher take notes during the observation period. Certain recorded ideas can serve as points for discussions during planned conferences.
3. Work closely with the student teacher so that maximum use can be made of the observation period.
4. Set specific goals for each observation. What is to be observed should be planned and discussed ahead of time.

5. Allocate time for the purpose of allowing the student teacher to examine the cumulative records of pupils. The cooperating teacher should arrange time for the student teacher to visit the various service areas of the school, such as administrative, guidance, library, audio-visual, health, etc.
6. Give the student teacher a guide that lists specific items that may be needed during the teaching experience. The following are suggested:
 - a. patterns of interactions among pupils and between the teacher and pupils.
 - b. the cooperating teacher's techniques for asking and answering questions, for administering praise, and for handling disciplinary problems;
 - c. the cooperating teacher's lists of rules and routines;
 - d. behavioral problems and causes;
 - e. use of audio-visual materials;
 - f. procedures for taking care of the physical environment;
 - g. providing for focal points upon which the student teacher can center the pupils' attention.
7. Be at your best as the cooperating teacher during the observation period so that the student teacher can view examples of master teaching techniques and effective ways of handling various problems, which arise in the classroom and within the school environment.
8. Share background information and relevant experiences with the student teacher.
9. Do not give the student teacher "busy" work. The most important experiences the student teacher should have consist of preparing lessons, presenting the lessons to the class, and evaluating each pupil's progress.
10. Allow the student teacher to teach a maximum of three classes. The rest of the student teacher's school day should be spent in planning, teacher-aid activities, attending to duties, reports, etc. Gradually, increase the student teacher's teaching responsibilities so that by the last weeks the student

teacher will assume full teaching responsibilities with a minimum of assistance from the cooperating teacher.

11. Do not point out the student teacher's mistake(s) in the presence of the pupils. If a crisis does arise, a prearranged plan should enable the cooperating teacher to step into the situation without embarrassment to the student teacher.
12. Do not leave the student teacher alone in the classroom until adequate strength in classroom management has been demonstrated by the student teacher.
13. Impress upon the student teacher that he or she never takes any action in the classroom, which may have legal implications; the cooperating teacher is legally responsible for whatever happens in the classroom.
14. Inform the student teacher as to where you can be located in case you have to leave the room. The cooperating teacher should always be available in the near vicinity of the classroom.
15. Encourage the student teacher to be firm but fair in his or her approach to pupils. Caution the student teacher against making threats which are unreasonable and which cannot be carried out.
16. Contact the principal and the university supervisor immediately if the student teacher is having major problems. If any problems arise that cannot be resolved by the team, any member of the team should contact the Director of Student Teaching/Internship and Field Experiences.
17. Allow the student teacher to accompany you to pupil and parent conferences.

Promoting Growth Through Demonstration Teaching

Directed observation is valuable to the extent that it allows the student teacher opportunity to observe a variety of effective teaching procedures. The cooperating teacher serves as a model teacher during the student teaching experience. Although no specific techniques or strategies are prescribed by the university, it is hoped that the cooperating teacher will demonstrate varied teaching methods and confer with the student teacher about the intended learning outcomes of each method.

Planning for Teaching

Good planning is essential to good teaching; therefore, the cooperating teacher should guide the student teacher in preparing lesson plans. Preparations should include not only the planning, but also execution of the lesson plans and an evaluation of the results.

As a cooperating teacher, your expertise may be of particular importance if the student teacher experiences difficulty in planning. The main problem may lie in the fact that many student teachers have made units and lesson plans in preparatory courses for student teaching, but the student teacher has not tested these plans in actual practice. Your guidance and assistance in planning will be needed by the student teacher until he or she demonstrates planning competence for successful teaching experiences.

The cooperating teacher may assist the student teacher in his or her initial attempts for effective planning by using the following suggestions:

1. Give the student teacher an over view of the goals and objectives of each class and discuss the present status of each class.
2. Provide related materials for the student teacher to read.
3. Acquaint the student teacher with available teaching aids resources.
4. Provide an outline of the year's work.
 - a. Indicate what part of the outline already has been covered.
 - b. Indicate the approximate time to be spent on each unit in the outline.
 - c. Discuss the outline prior to the development of lesson plans.
5. Provide an outline of a unit previously taught or currently being taught to include lesson plans drawn from the unit.
 - a. Encourage the study and use of several different methods of developing units of work.
 - b. Encourage the study of a unit outline prior to having the student teacher Develop a unit of instruction or lesson plans.
6. Request that the student teacher make an extra copy of each lesson plan that is to be reviewed by the cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher should review

the lesson plans and make suggestions prior to the presentation of the lesson by the student teacher.

In making lesson plans to be used in the classroom, the student teacher and the cooperating teacher must be aware of the need to include: (1) focus; (2) objective/purpose; (3) explanation (teaching procedures); (4) observation and feedback techniques; (5) guided practice; (6) reteach strategies; (7) independent practices; (8) enrichment activities; and (9) closure; procedures for evaluating mastery. Through cooperative analysis of the planned activities, many potential difficulties may be resolved before the student teacher implements the lesson. Favorable results will be obtained through earnest cooperative planning and hard work. Frequent conferences are recommended to ensure that the overall objectives are being achieved and that pupils in the classroom are benefiting from the planning and teaching at an optimum level.

Providing Assistance in Developing Teaching and Evaluation Techniques

One of the functions of the teacher is to create a democratic setting for learning. In creating this setting, a teacher may use a variety of methods in a given learning situation, keeping in mind that one learns best by doing; therefore, pupils need to be involved mentally and physically in the learning experiences no matter which method is used.

Some approaches, which may be used singly or jointly in a presentation, are: (1) direct instruction, (2) reflective approach, (3) demonstrations, (4) problem solving, (5) laboratory techniques, (6) audio visual modes, (7) individualized instruction, (8) learning center approach, (9) micro-teaching, (10) role playing, (11) inquiry approach, (12) group, (13) cooperative learning; (14) whole language, (15) modeling, (16) large/small group instruction, (17) simulation and Socratic questioning, and (18) higher order questions models.

A major objective of the student teaching program is to help the student teacher develop an effective personal teaching style. If the objective is to be achieved, several conditions for growth should be provided. The following are suggested.

1. The student teacher should have many opportunities to teach. It is through adequate experience in actual teaching that a personal teaching style is developed.
2. The student teacher should have opportunities to observe and experiment with a variety of teaching strategies and materials. Rigid teaching patterns should be avoided. The student teacher and the cooperating teacher should feel free to learn from each other.

3. The student teacher should be encouraged to test the workability of an idea(s) and to show initiative in implementing ideas. Experimental ideas or teaching strategies should not detract from the learning situation.
4. The student teacher should be assisted in his or her attempts to perceive the classroom situation realistically. An ability to realistically perceive the total environment is sometimes limited, particularly when one is a novice teacher. The cooperating teacher can be of great assistance in helping the student teacher analyze personal teaching behaviors.

The student teacher is more likely to develop an effective teaching style if he or she has accurate knowledge about the pupils. How the pupils perceive the student teacher, as well as the student teacher's perception of self, are also influential factors linked to the development of an effective teaching style.

5. The student teacher who has gained confidence in his or her ability as a teacher usually will not feel a need to adhere to prescribed teaching methods or to textbooks and other external materials. Spontaneity should be encouraged. The ability to be flexible, to depart from predetermined plans, and to make independent judgments in the classroom are important elements in developing a classroom personality and a personal teaching style.
6. It is important to remember that the student teacher is learning to teach. The student teacher is expected to make some mistakes. During the crucial period of the beginning teacher's professional life, the cooperating teacher can be of great assistance in contributing to the student teacher's sense of security and success. When mistakes are made, encourage the student teacher to try different approaches in an attempt to resolve a problem.

Promoting Growth Through Continuous and Cooperative Evaluation

The cooperating teacher should assess the progress of the student teacher on a daily basis. This assessment serves as a basis for conferences. In an effort to help the student teacher conduct a self-appraisal, both strong and weak points should be noted (a positive approach with strong points given first is suggested).

Anything that is short of the cooperating teacher's expectations should not come as a surprise at the final evaluation, but should be discussed with the student teacher as soon as it is noticed so that remediation can be made. No final grade should be unsatisfactory unless it has been brought to the attention of the university supervisor and the student teacher prior to the mid-term evaluation.