

VSU Mentor Teacher Guidelines

Information, Schedule, and Evaluations

Congratulations! You have been chosen as a mentor teacher because you have shown excellence in teaching and have a desire and willingness to mentor a teacher candidate! Mentoring is one-on-one, individualized support of a future teacher that involves collaboration, inquiry and reflection. Your involvement this semester is vital to the development of our future educators.

All mentor teachers must have at least 3 years of P-12 teaching experience in the field in which they are mentoring. Mentors are selected based on recommendations from their administration as well as meeting the *criteria for selection. Strong supervisory experience and **mentor training is preferred.

Research clearly indicates that the mentor teacher has the most influence on the teacher candidate during the clinical practice experience. Your role is demanding, but also rewarding, as you guide the teacher candidate during the transition from student to teacher. Much of what the teacher candidate learns during this experience will be modeled after you, so it is important that you model effective instructional strategies and encourage the teacher candidate to try them also. (Hopefully, you will learn from the teacher candidate as well!)

Clinical Practice is probably the most valuable part of a teacher training program, and the guidance provided by mentor teachers is invaluable. Please accept the appreciation of the faculty of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services for the outstanding job you do in helping us to prepare future teachers.

This mentor teacher packet includes information and requirements about orientation for the teacher candidate, planning/teaching expectations, solo teaching, evaluation of the teacher candidates, and evaluation of VSU supervisor. Attached to this information packet is a guideline for the mentor teacher (this form does **NOT** need to be returned). This is a suggested guideline as we realize that “individualized instruction” is also important for our university students as well.

All forms (evaluations of the teacher candidate and evaluation of the VSU supervisor) will be completed on-line; instructions are given later in this packet. If you have any questions, please contact the Center for Program Assessment, Analytics, and Evaluation (cpaae@valdosta.edu).

***Criteria for Mentor Selection**

- At least 3 years of P-12 teaching experience as a certified teacher in the area in which he/she will be mentoring
- Current knowledge of teaching styles and philosophies
- A valid, clear renewable professional teaching certificate in the field in which he/she teaches and the teacher candidate is being prepared
- A commitment to teacher professional development and to making a positive contribution to the cooperating school/university partnership
- Ability to serve as a positive role model for the teacher candidate by providing opportunities for continual feedback and reflection
- Willingness to commit the extra time and effort needed
- Compliance with all requirements regarding the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators
- Proficiency in the use of instructional technology in the classroom

**Various mentor trainings/workshops will be held during the semester and each summer. Your participation is encouraged. You will be notified as these occur. Please make an effort to attend one of these trainings as it will certainly answer many of your questions.

Orientation for the Teacher Candidate

The orientation is important to help the teacher candidate and university supervisor know the procedures you use with students, your teaching schedule, school policies for teachers and students, and much more. The orientation activities may take place over the first few days of the clinical practice experience and should include:

- Providing access to the teacher handbook or other documents which explain policies, rules, and regulations of the school or system.
- Providing a work place for the teacher candidate and any instructional materials and textbooks that will be needed by the teacher candidate to plan his/her instructional activities.
- Explaining the composition of the class(es) and calling attention to such factors as specific needs of students with exceptionalities as well as any other matters that are important for the teacher candidate to know.
- Discussing the lesson plan format to be used and establishing deadlines when lesson plans will be due to you for review. **Note: If plans are not submitted on time or if they are not of acceptable quality, the student should NOT be permitted to teach, and the VSU supervisor should be notified.**
- Providing opportunities for the teacher candidate to become familiar with pertinent resources in the library, media center, and elsewhere.

Planning and Teaching Expectations

As quickly as possible, you should encourage the teacher candidate to assist you in classroom procedures and activities, which will begin to prepare him/her to assume some teaching responsibilities. ***Co-teaching is perfectly acceptable and encouraged!*** How soon the teacher candidate assumes teaching responsibility for a class is dependent on his/her performance during this time of assisting you; also, the VSU supervisor should be consulted in determining the teacher candidate's readiness to assume responsibility for a class. This transition should be planned in such a way that both you and the teacher candidate feel confident in increasing the amount of responsibility. The students in your classes should always be given first consideration to ensure that any changes do not adversely affect them. Other factors to consider during this transition of teaching responsibilities are:

- Involving the teacher candidate with the classes as you are teaching to help the teacher candidate become more comfortable in dealing with the students, become more familiar with curricular expectations, and develop his/her "teacher presence."
- Identifying clearly the lesson plan format you want from the teacher candidate and deadlines for submitting lesson plans. Discuss GPS/GSE/QCC requirements or other critical aspects of the lessons that he/she will be planning. You are invaluable to the teacher candidate as he/she prepares those first plans--how to get the students engaged, how to check if they learned what was taught, and much, much more. The teacher candidate's plans should include sufficient detail to demonstrate that he/she is well prepared and also permit you to confirm that expected curricular/instructional objectives are being met. Your review and feedback of the lesson plans is critical in helping the teacher candidate to achieve success as the plans are implemented!
- Reviewing any tests developed by the teacher candidate prior to their administration. After tests are given, the teacher candidate should review the results and grading procedures with you. This could be

the basis for reflection by the teacher candidate on which instructional activities were effective and which ones could be improved.

- Reviewing the lesson plans and discussing them with the teacher candidate prior to their implementation should include feedback on how the plans meet GPS/GSE/QCC standards, any expected local outcomes, how to engage the students more effectively, and how to sequence instruction and assess student learning effectively.
- Providing feedback frequently! Clinical Practice is a learning experience, and the teacher candidates have been told to expect feedback and constructive criticism from you on their teaching performance. Encourage the teacher candidate to reflect on his/her plans and teaching and help him/her consider ways to improve. A regularly scheduled time to discuss the teacher candidate's progress is highly recommended. (If at all possible, avoid correcting the teacher candidate in front of the class.) However, this feedback is essential to their continued growth.

Solo Teaching/Co-Teaching

Teacher candidates are expected to solo teach a full class/case load for a minimum of three weeks. (Each department will have stricter guidelines depending on the departmental requirements for solo teaching-three weeks is the minimum COEHS requirement) The timing of this solo teaching and the length of it are dependent on the performance of the teacher candidate. The solo time may be longer if performance meets your expectations. After the solo period, you might wish to try team teaching together; or there may be a gradual shift of the teaching back to you full time. In any of these cases, the decision should be a collaborative one based on discussions with the teacher candidate and VSU supervisor. The optimal experience for the teacher candidate would be to have as much time alone with the students as possible. Of course, the discretion is left up to the mentor teacher and the university supervisor.

After the solo teaching time, discuss with the VSU supervisor and teacher candidate specific activities that could be provided to the teacher candidate to enrich or expand his/her professional development. These activities could provide experiences at other grade levels, assisting professionals such as media specialists, counselors, Title I teachers, etc. The teacher candidate should remain actively engaged with the students during this time.

Evaluation of the Teacher Candidate

You will be providing feedback to the teacher candidate constantly as you work together and as the teacher candidate begins to assist you with various classroom activities. We suggest daily communication with your teacher candidate discussing strengths and weaknesses. **Honesty is the best policy!** Most of the feedback you provide to the teacher candidate will be informal, but you are expected to complete three formal formative evaluations culminating in a collaborative summative evaluation and share these results with the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor. (For COMD and ECSE please refer to your department handbook for specifics.) These evaluations are collected by VSU to provide information about the overall performance of our teacher candidates within and across departments. These evaluations will be completed on-line. The evaluation materials are located at the following Teacher Candidate Assessment website:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/coe/teached/formativesummative-evaluation-information.php>

When you go to the above website, you will note that there are four forms for you to complete. Three of these are evaluations of the teacher candidate and should be completed as explained below. The other form is the mentor teacher's evaluation of the VSU supervisor and should be completed near the end of the

semester. **After you complete each form, please click the “Submit” button only ONE time—this may take a few seconds. Please print a copy of the evaluation BEFORE you click the “Submit” button.**

Initial Formative Evaluation -- This should occur as early in the semester as possible (a week or two) after the teacher candidate has started any teaching responsibilities. High expectations should be established during this initial formative evaluation to identify strengths as well as areas needing improvement. In fact, the scoring on this evaluation should be relatively low since the teacher candidate is just beginning. After you complete the form on-line, please print a copy of your evaluation for the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor. Please schedule a time to discuss your evaluation of the teacher candidate with him/her; be sure to include in your discussion ways in which the teacher candidate can improve his/her performance. **Please submit your initial formative evaluation on-line by the due date listed on the schedule.**

Mid Formative Evaluation -- A mid formative evaluation should be completed around the mid-term point. The results of this evaluation can be compared to the initial one to determine growth and to identify areas for additional growth. Again, the emphasis is on promoting growth, not determining a grade. Please print a copy of your evaluation for both the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor. Discuss your evaluation results with the teacher candidate and VSU supervisor; again, please suggest ways for the teacher candidate to improve his/her performance. Solicit feedback from the VSU supervisor regarding his/her evaluations of the teacher candidate.

Please submit your mid formative evaluation on-line by the due date listed on the schedule.

Final Formative Evaluation -- The final formative evaluation should be done near the end of the semester as the teacher candidate completes his/her teaching responsibilities. Please print a copy of your evaluation for both the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor; this evaluation should provide the focus for a discussion with the teacher candidate and VSU supervisor regarding the overall clinical practice experience and the assignment of a final grade. This data is important in helping VSU identify overall program strengths and weaknesses. The final formative evaluation is not placed online.

The first two formative evaluations are to be completed on-line. Thank you for submitting your evaluations of the teacher candidate by the due date.

Summative Evaluation – After consulting with you and the teacher candidate, the VSU supervisor will complete and submit the summative evaluation in LiveText. This should not be completed until the final formative evaluation has been completed by you, the teacher candidate, and the VSU supervisor.

While these three evaluations are submitted online, we realize that many more evaluations/observations do occur during the semester by the mentor and the university supervisor. Please share these with your teacher candidate and place in the clinical practice folder for a reference. The university supervisor will be responsible for collecting all evaluations at the end of the semester.

Overall Grade -- The clinical practice experience is graded as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” The VSU supervisor should solicit your input regarding the teacher candidate’s overall performance; however, the final grade for the teacher candidate is the ultimate responsibility of the VSU supervisor.

Evaluation of the VSU Supervisor

On the Teacher Candidate Assessment website is an evaluation form for your use (the mentor teacher) in evaluating the VSU supervisor; please complete this form on-line by the due date listed on the schedule.

Substitute Teaching

Teacher candidates are **NOT** allowed to serve as substitute teachers during the semester they are participating in clinical practice.

Grievances

The College of Education and Human Services and the partner school agree that any situation in which the teacher candidate has a concern that he or she would like to formally pursue, the candidate should follow the following protocol: (1) Mentor Teacher, (2) University Supervisor, (3) Department Head, (4) Dean.

edTPA (State-approved content pedagogy assessment)

All teacher candidates (except those majoring in Career Technical Education and Communication Disorders) must attempt the appropriate state-approved content pedagogy assessment (edTPA) for their major prior to the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in clinical practice or internship.

Questions

If you have questions regarding this information or during the student teaching experience, please contact **Mrs. Renee Whitmer, Director of Clinical Experiences and Certification, at 229-249-2786 or email (brwhitmer@valdosta.edu).** Any and all concerns may be discussed at any time.

Mentor Teacher Guidelines

As the mentor teacher, I:

- _____ Provided orientation activities to prepare teacher candidate--school policies, materials, classroom procedures, established work place for student, etc.
- _____ Discussed with teacher candidate--lesson planning, format, and deadlines for plans to be submitted.
- _____ Began involving the teacher candidate with the students and in assisting me.
- _____ Met with VSU supervisor for orientation session.
- _____ Discussed beginning of teaching responsibility for teacher candidate--which class and when.
- _____ Asked the teacher candidate to do a self-evaluation soon after he/she began teaching and to discuss the results with me.
- _____ Completed the initial formative evaluation on-line and discussed it with the teacher candidate. Continued to encourage the teacher candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- _____ Maintained regularly scheduled interactions with teacher candidate about planning, teaching, discipline, etc.
- _____ Scheduled solo teaching schedule (minimum of three weeks) and reviewed expectations that should take place during this time.
- _____ Continued to encourage teacher candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- _____ Completed mid formative evaluation on-line and discussed with teacher candidate.
- _____ Discussed teacher candidate's progress with VSU supervisor and solicited feedback.
- _____ Discussed with the teacher candidate his/her activities after the solo teaching period; this could include shared teaching responsibilities, team teaching, as well as the teacher candidate observing other teachers such as special education teachers or teachers at other grade levels.
- _____ Completed final formative evaluation on-line and discussed with teacher candidate. Met with VSU supervisor to discuss overall performance of teacher candidate.
- _____ Completed VSU supervisor evaluation using link provided by Director of Clinical Experiences and Certification.

Characteristics of a Great Mentor

Welcoming Attitude
Organized
Patient
Good Communicator
Professional
Flexible
Compassion
Enthusiastic
Honest
Good role model
Open and Understanding
Able to provide constructive criticism
Willing to host a teacher candidate for the right reasons
Knowledge of the university requirements
Willing to admit mistakes as a mentor
Love of children
Positive reinforcement
Be able to let go of control~relinquish power to allow student to grow as a future teacher.
Nurture the talent of the teacher candidate
Share teaching tools/ideas/resources
Must be a classroom disciplinarian
Involve teacher candidate in all areas of teaching
Knowledge of current practice and educational trends in education
Be available “after hours” teacher candidate
Must have leadership skills
Plans well as a teacher and shows teacher candidate how to accomplish this goal
Must maintain confidentiality with university students
Willingness to remain current with education trends/continuous improvement

What you can expect from the university:

Orientation with the mentor, teacher candidate and the university supervisor
Technical support for the mentor
Continued support from university supervisor throughout the semester
Scheduled/documented time for meeting regularly with teacher candidates
Clear expectations/communication from beginning of semester to the end
Clarification of university evaluation instrument; provide handbook to use as a guide

What you can should expect from the teacher candidate:

Professional-arrives on time, prepares lesson plans on time, and dresses professionally each day
Respectful of mentor and students at all times
Maintains confidentiality at all times
Has a positive attitude and personality
Able to provide basic classroom management
Knowledgeable of content
Acceptable written/spoken language
A team player
Willingness to grow and learn

Developed by the Mentor Committee and the Field Experience Committee