



Valdosta State University (VSU) Mentor Educator Guidelines

Information, Schedule, and Evaluations

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

All mentor educators 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 selection¹. Strong supervisory experience and mentor training is preferred².

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

Clinical practice is probably the most valuable part of a training program, and the guidance provided by mentor educators 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 educators.

This mentor educator packet includes information and requirements about orientation for the teacher candidate, planning/teaching expectations, solo teaching, evaluation of the candidates, and evaluation of the VSU supervisor.

All forms (evaluations of the 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 Natalie Kuhlmann at nmkuhlmann@valdosta.edu.

¹Criteria for Mentor Selection

- At least 3 years of P-12 teaching experience as a certified educator in the area in which he/she will be mentoring
- Current knowledge of teaching styles and philosophies
- A valid, clear renewable professional educator certificate in the field in which he/she teaches and the teacher candidate is being prepared
- A commitment to educator professional development and to making a positive contribution to the cooperating school/university partnership
- Ability to serve as a positive role model for the 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

²Various mentor trainings/workshops will be held during the semester and each summer. Your participation is encouraged. You will be notified as these occur.

Orientation for the Candidate

The orientation is important to help the candidate and VSU supervisor know the procedures you use with students, your teaching schedule, school policies for educators 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/educator handbook or other documents which explain policies, rules, and regulations of the school or system.
- Providing a work place for the candidate and any instructional materials and textbooks that will be needed by the 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 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 candidate should NOT be permitted to teach, and the VSU supervisor should be notified.**
- Providing opportunities for the 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 candidate to assist you in classroom procedures and activities, which will begin to prepare him/her to assume some professional responsibilities. ***Co-teaching is perfectly acceptable and encouraged!*** How soon the candidate assumes teaching responsibility is dependent on his/her performance during this time of assisting you. This transition should be planned in such a way that both you and the 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 professional responsibilities are:

- Involving the candidate with the classes as you are teaching to help the candidate become more comfortable in dealing with the students, become more familiar with curricular expectations, and develop his/her “educator presence.”
- Identifying clearly the lesson plan format you want from the 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 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 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 candidate to achieve success as the plans are implemented!
- Reviewing any tests developed by the candidate prior to their administration. After tests are given, the candidate should review the results and grading procedures with you. This could be the basis for reflection by the candidate on which instructional activities were effective and which ones could be improved.
- Reviewing the lesson plans and discussing them with the 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 candidates have been told to expect feedback and constructive criticism from you on their teaching performance. Encourage the candidate to reflect on his/her plans, performance, and help him/her consider ways to improve. A regularly scheduled time to discuss the candidate’s progress is highly recommended. If at all possible, avoid correcting the candidate in front of the class. However, this feedback is essential to their continued growth.

Solo Teaching/Co-Teaching

Candidates are expected to solo teach a full class/case load for a minimum of three weeks. Each department will have guidelines depending on the departmental requirements for solo teaching--three weeks is the minimum college requirement. The timing of this solo teaching and the length of it are dependent on the

performance of the 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 candidate and VSU supervisor. The optimal experience for the candidate would be to have as much time alone with the students as possible. Of course, the discretion is left up to the mentor educator and the VSU supervisor.

Evaluation of the Teacher Candidate (For Communication Disorders please refer to your department handbook for specifics)

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 two formal formative evaluations culminating in a collaborative summative evaluation and share these results with the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor. 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 online via the website Anthology Portfolio. The evaluation materials are located at the following website:

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

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. Two evaluations are submitted at this time: the Candidate Assessment on Performance Standards (CAPS)/Intern Keys assessment and the Professional Behaviors and Dispositions (PBDA) assessment. Please schedule a time to discuss your evaluation results with the teacher candidate; be sure to include in your discussion ways in which the teacher candidate can improve his/her performance. Solicit feedback from the VSU supervisor regarding his/her evaluations of the teacher candidate. **Please submit your initial formative evaluation online by the due date listed on the schedule.**

Mid-Point Check In - There will be a formal or informal evaluation completed at mid point during clinical practice facilitated by the VSU supervisor and determined by each program. Some programs and VSU supervisors may visit more than twice and use additional departmental evaluation forms during these observations to evaluate the teacher candidate. The VSU supervisor may also ask you to complete an additional CAPS or PBDA evaluation or collaborate with him/her on completing them. These efforts are all to ensure the teacher candidate will be a successful educator upon program completion.

Summative Evaluation - After consulting with you and the teacher candidate near the end of the clinical practice experience, the VSU supervisor will complete and submit the summative evaluation online. While these evaluations are submitted online, we realize that many more evaluations/observations do occur during the semester by the mentor educator, teacher candidate, and the VSU supervisor. Please share these with your teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor.

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 ultimately the responsibility of the VSU supervisor.

Evaluation of the VSU Supervisor and Clinical Practice

Near the end of the placement, you will be asked to complete an evaluation on the VSU supervisor who you worked with during the semester as well as the clinical practice experience. This information is important to help us improve the supervision process. Results of these evaluations are shared with supervisors only

AFTER the placement is completed. Please complete this online form by the due date listed online. You will receive an email from Anthology Portfolio once the form opens near the end of the semester.

Survey for Program Improvement

Near the end of the placement, you will be able to complete an evaluation on the candidate's overall performance and readiness to solo teach. This information is important to help us improve preparation programs, and results of these evaluations are shared with program faculty only AFTER the placement is completed. Please complete this online form by the due date listed online. You will receive an email from Anthology Portfolio once the form opens near the end of the semester.

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.

Questions

If you have questions regarding this information or your experience, you can contact the VSU supervisor, VSU department head, Melissa Nolley (the COEHS Partnership Relations Specialist, 229-333-7834 or mmnolley@valdosta.edu) or Natalie Kuhlmann (Director, 229-253-2863 or nmkuhlmann@valdosta.edu).

Mentor Educator Checklist

As the mentor educator, I:

- Provided orientation activities to prepare candidate (such as school policies, materials, classroom procedures, established work place for candidate, and so forth).
- Discussed lesson planning, format, and deadlines for plans to be submitted with candidate.
- Met with VSU supervisor for orientation session.
- Discussed beginning of teaching responsibility with candidate.
- Asked the candidate to do a self-evaluation soon after he/she began teaching and to discuss the results with me.
- Completed the initial formative evaluation (CAPS/Intern Keys & PBDA for teaching fields) online and discussed it with the teacher candidate and VSU supervisor. Continued to encourage the candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- Maintained regularly scheduled interactions with candidate about planning, teaching, discipline, and so forth.
- Scheduled solo teaching schedule (minimum of three weeks) and reviewed expectations that should take place during this time.
- Continued to encourage candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- Discussed candidate's progress with VSU supervisor and solicited feedback.
- Discussed with the candidate his/her activities after the solo teaching period; this could include shared teaching responsibilities and team teaching.
- Met with VSU supervisor and candidate to discuss overall, summative performance of candidate.
- Completed the Mentor Teacher Evaluation of VSU Supervisor & Clinical Practice and Survey for Program Improvement evaluations online (teaching fields only).