

USU School of Teacher Education and Leadership Level III Practicum Handbook



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Level III Practicum Details

The Level III Practicum is an exceedingly rewarding and challenging semester for teacher candidates in the Elementary Education program. Practicum students will be in the classroom to **observe whole group lessons** from their mentor teachers and **engage in teaching** in a variety of settings such as **one-on-one reteaching, small group mini-lessons, and whole class instruction in multiple content areas**.

We encourage students to immerse themselves in the school climate and to think deeply about the work of the teachers, in preparation for their upcoming student teaching semester. In our experience, these objectives are met best when students learn from master teachers at work in their own classrooms.

What is the structure of the Level III practicum?

To ensure an accurate and organized schedule, all placements are arranged by the TEAL Office of Field Experiences (OFE; see contact information on following page). Following notification of their placement by the OFE, practicum students will contact their mentor teacher to arrange their schedule and first visit to the school and classroom.

LOGAN CAMPUS SCHEDULE

Level III Practicum students at the Logan campus will self-arrange **3 preliminary days** in the classroom, prior to starting the **full-time practicum** towards the end of the semester.

STATEWIDE CAMPUS SCHEDULE

Level III Practicum students in the Statewide campuses will arrange **5 preliminary days** in the classroom, building to **three full-time weeks** of practicum at the end of the semester (for a total of at least 20 full days in the practicum classroom.)

See also the Paraprofessional, Hired Teacher, and Substitute Teacher policies on pages 11–12.

ALL practicum hours and attendance should coincide with the following guidelines:

- A full day of practicum will follow the normal teaching contract day. This usually begins 30 minutes before school and/or ends 30 minutes after school; this gives students a unique behind-the-scenes look at the preparation and reflection that happens when students aren't in the classroom. It's a great opportunity to channel your inner Zen!
- The practicum day and time should be consistent throughout the semester, with the exception of when students need to make-up a day due to scheduled school holidays or illness.



What will Level III practicum students do?

Level III Practicum students will not only observe, learn from, and teach with their mentor teachers, they will also complete assignments from their Level III methods courses in the areas of: **science, language arts, math, and social studies**. (See the Practicum Assignment Checklist, pages 7–8, for details).

Prior to the full-time practicum weeks, the practicum student, mentor teacher, and USU supervisor will meet to discuss goals/outcomes/questions for the practicum in a **TRIAD Conference**.

To provide the opportunity for students to reflect in their teaching in the classroom, each student and mentor teacher will review the **Student Teaching and Evaluation Rubric and Self-Reflection (STER) form**, to familiarize the student and mentor teachers with the competencies needed to be an effective teacher. With the Mentor Teacher, practicum students will review and discuss a STER reflection at the beginning of the Level III practicum. At the conclusion of the practicum the USU student will complete the STER self-reflection form with the mentor teacher as the final formative feedback. (These forms will require the signature of the USU student, mentor teacher, and USU Supervisor for approval to Student Teach.)

Beyond observation, reflection, and teaching in each of the subject areas for the practicum, Level III students will have at least **one formal observation** during the full-time weeks of practicum **from their USU supervisor** who will conduct an in-person or virtual visit to the classroom to observe the student teaching a lesson plan they have prepared.

Please also see the resources below, including a checklist of recommended experiences for practicum students (page 6) and tips for effective mentoring (page 5).

Questions or Concerns? Please contact us!

Level III Practicum Faculty Instructors:

- Logan campuses: Dr. Max Longhurst: max.longhurst@usu.edu
- Statewide campuses: Dr. Marla Robertson: marla.robertson@usu.edu

Office of Field Experiences: OFE@usu.edu

- Director of Field Experiences: Sharla Hart: sharla.hart@usu.edu
- Program Coordinator: Karli Fish: karli.fish@usu.edu



Tips on Effective Mentor Teaching

Being an effective mentor teacher for pre-service teachers is a critical role, as it greatly influences the development of future educators. Here are 5 helpful tips for being an effective mentor:

1. Provide Clear and Constructive Feedback

- Offer specific, actionable feedback on both strengths and areas for growth. Balance positive feedback with suggestions for improvement to foster a growth mindset.

2. Model Best Teaching Practices

- Demonstrate effective teaching strategies, classroom management, and reflective practices in your own teaching. Show them how you plan and execute lessons thoughtfully.

3. Encourage Reflection

- Guide pre-service teachers to regularly reflect on their teaching experiences. Ask reflective questions like, "What went well?" and "What might you do differently next time?"

4. Offer Gradual Responsibility

- Start with observation and gradually increase their teaching responsibilities. Let them co-teach or lead parts of lessons to build confidence and skills in a supported way.

5. Foster a Supportive, Open Environment

- Be approachable and empathetic. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable asking questions, making mistakes, and discussing challenges without judgment.



Recommended Level III Practicum Experiences

The Level III practicum is a great opportunity for students to become immersed in daily education practices. Consider the following activities during the practicum to ensure a successful and fulfilling experience.

Use technology	Distribute supplies/equipment
Read aloud	Help children individually
Explain instructional material	Create activities to integrate into the curriculum
Engage in Inquiry-based science teaching strategies	Arrange displays/exhibits
Use math manipulatives	Conduct a class meeting
Instruct small groups (simple activities)	Locate resource materials
Observe other teachers (e.g. special education, P.E., music)	Work with individuals and small groups
Conduct storytelling time	Implement a guided reading lesson
Conference with students about their writing	Conduct experiments
Teach simple mini-lessons	Create rubrics
Use multiple methods of assessments	Create learning centers
Learn to develop a lesson	Help children form teams/groups
Conduct spelling activities, games, etc.	Explain/demonstrate an activity or use of equipment
Help evaluate spelling	Present game rules
Introduce manipulative activities	Be involved in content area reading lessons
Share alternative ways to problem solve	Keep score/referee
Help with individual work	Assist students who need extra help with concepts
Prepare materials	Take attendance, lunch count, etc.
Keep records of grades	Share special talents in any curriculum area
Manage library time	Prepare and lead activities to enrich or extend the curriculum
Prepare displays of student work	Listen to children read

Please note: Excessive clerical tasks (making copies, etc.) and teacher candidates being left alone in the classroom with students should be avoided during the practicum.



Level III Practicum Assignment Checklist

Specific due dates for assignments are provided in Canvas each semester.

Done	Item	Contact
	Practicum: Declaration of Commitment	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: Paraprofessional Accommodation Form (Applicable students only)	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: Practicum Schedule (Statewide campus students only)	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: Model Code of Ethics for Educators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read through the MCEE, develop questions to discuss with your mentor, meet with your mentor to discuss the MCEE. 	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: STER-Overview Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read through the STER, develop goals/experiences that you would like to discuss, meet with your mentor to discuss the STER. 	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: TRIAD Conference	USU Supervisor
	Practicum: Timesheet (Statewide campus students only)	Office of Field Experience
	Practicum: USU Supervisor: Teaching Observation	USU Supervisor
	Practicum: Level III: STER – Final Self Reflection	USU Supervisor
	Writing Lessons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach a Teaching Letters lesson with reflections. - Teach a phonological awareness/spelling lesson with reflections. - Teach three writing lessons with reflections. 	Language Arts Instructor
	Mathematics Diagnostic Interview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose and describe a student to assess; - Design an interview protocol to assess the student’s knowledge of a mathematics concept; - Conduct the interview assessment with the student; - Evaluate the student’s mathematical knowledge. 	Math Instructor
	Mathematics Teaching & Learning Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part 1: Plan two lessons - Part 2: Reflection 	Math Instructor
	Mini Science Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete and teach a mini-unit that includes 3 lessons (can be integrated with Language Arts and/or Math). - Turn in one lesson plan on Canvas. 	Science Instructor
	Social Studies: Three Journal Prompts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry #1: Reflect on how you see Social Studies in your classroom. 	Social Studies Instructor



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry #2: Ask for an opportunity to teach a short S.S. Lesson – reflect on that conversation. - Entry #3: Imagine you are able to teach a short 15 min S.S. lesson, respond to the given prompts. <p><i>**Be sure to see the specific reflection questions for each entry within your S.S. Canvas course.**</i></p>	
	<p>Competency Checklists (All Subject Areas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit the completed Literacy Competencies Comprehensive Checklist. - Submit the completed Math Competencies Checklist. - Submit the completed Social Studies Competencies Checklist. - Submit the Science Competencies Checklist. 	<p>Relevant Course Instructors</p>



Professional Guidelines

In keeping with the [Model Code of Ethics for Educators](#), the following guidelines should be followed during practicum experiences, including student teaching or internships.

Organization

Practicum students should apply the following strategies to help them keep accurate, organized and legible records:

- Complete all required record keeping before leaving the practicum site each scheduled day.
- Consistently follow the mentor teacher's verbal or written directions.
- Ensure all records contain a date and signature and/or name of the person producing the documentation.
- Avoid leaving records in open areas of the classroom or in locations unknown to the teacher.
- Communicate to the mentor teacher the location of records before leaving (if applicable).

Confidentiality

As participants in public school programs, practicum students are legally required to maintain the privacy rights of students they instruct as well as other students in the classroom.

As a general rule, discussions about students should concern only their educational goals and appropriate instructional strategies. In addition, any references to a student **should not include their name** in order to preserve confidentiality.

- Do not discuss any student's disabilities, academic or behavior problems, or any other attributes with fellow students, friends, or family. Exceptions to this policy are limited to discussions about educational goals and appropriate instructional strategies with the university supervisor, instructors, or mentor teacher.
- Should an occasion arise in which you are uncertain about the appropriateness of sharing or providing information, the final decision should be made by your mentor teacher and university supervisor.

Adapt to Changes in Classroom Routine

Classroom routines change rapidly and sometimes abruptly. The practicum student must be prepared to change procedures, alter schedules, and modify lesson plans. Make immediate alterations based on the mentor teacher's verbal or written direction. Ask questions of the mentor teacher for clarification.

As a university practicum student, you are expected to act and communicate as a professional. You are expected to be alert at all times. You are a guest in the school environment. It is



unprofessional to make disparaging remarks about your mentor teacher or their practices with fellow students, friends, faculty, or others.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

It is unacceptable and potentially unlawful to be under the influence of any substance that impairs your ability to think, talk, move about, or remain awake at school.

Language interpreted by school personnel or university supervisors as vulgar, abusive, or offensive is unacceptable.

Dress Appropriately and Maintain Personal Hygiene

Practicum students are expected to maintain a neat appearance without any offensive body odor. Clothing should be professionally modest, clean, and in good repair.

- Dress in a way that is consistent with the dress of the majority of teachers and administrators in the same school (or better).
- Save your halter tops, shorts, thongs, flip flops, worn or ripped jeans, bare midriffs, and low-cut tops for the summer months when you're not in school.
- Wear shoes that are comfortable and clean.
- Hair should be clean and styled to be consistent with the style of the majority of teachers and administrators in the same school.
- Appropriate dress also includes wearing your **USU Teacher Candidate photo ID badge** in the school and classroom at all times. (The mentor teacher can request it be removed in the classroom. If so, the ID must be worn in other school areas).

Respond Favorably to Constructive Feedback and Implement Feedback

The university supervisor's objective regarding the practicum experience is to provide the student with frequent learning opportunities so teaching skills significantly increase from beginning to end. To achieve this objective, the university supervisor, mentor teacher, and other school personnel will provide performance feedback. Remember, asking questions for clarity is always a good move! Embrace the feedback, acknowledge where you can improve, and watch your teaching journey get smoother and more successful.

Arrive on Time Each Scheduled Day

Practicum students are expected to be punctual and to attend every scheduled period. Absences are only acceptable for certain emergencies related to health, illness, family, or for court appearance. See the full USU guidelines for excused absences here: [Attendance and Excused Absences](#). (Excluded from the list of acceptable absences are weddings or other events, vacations, conflicts with work schedule, etc.)

Prior to an absence, **practicum students must contact both the mentor teacher AND the university supervisor** to request the absence, describe the reason for the absence, and indicate the scheduled return date. When possible, practicum students should convey lesson



plans, behavior intervention plans, or other preparations to the mentor teacher prior to the absence (verbally or in written form). *At minimum, practicum students will need to make up unexcused or excessive excused absences.*

A practicum student is considered tardy if she/he is not present in the classroom or scheduled teaching location with the necessary teaching materials *at least 5 minutes before instruction begins*. For example, tardiness is defined as not present in the classroom with teaching materials at 10:25 for a 10:30 lesson.

Mentor teachers should immediately report tardiness and unexcused absences to the university supervisor and/or the OFE.

Maintenance of Practicum Placements

Placements in public schools are secured due to the willingness of mentor teachers to allow students to instruct their students. Mentor teachers must maintain their accountability for students' well-being. Thus, if the mentor teacher feels their students are benefiting, the practicum student will remain in the placement. If the mentor teacher feels it is not in their students' best interest to continue work with the practicum student, the placement may be terminated.

If the mentor teacher requests that a placement be terminated, meetings between the mentor teacher, university supervisor, OFE Director, and practicum student will be held to discuss the problem. Following the meeting(s), the university supervisor and OFE Director will meet to evaluate the reason(s) for termination. Resulting actions may include (a) seeking a new placement, (b) withdrawing from the course, or (c) failing the course.

Paraprofessional Policy

Students concurrently employed as a paraprofessional (or substitute teacher) during the Level III Practicum are eligible for hours accommodations, confirmed by a completed Paraprofessional Accommodation Form (which will be provided to students by the OFE upon placement approval, and requires their principal or supervisor's final signature).

Hired Teacher Policy

Students concurrently employed as a teacher of record during the Level III Practicum will work with the OFE and university faculty to make individual arrangements based on current job responsibilities.

Substitute Teacher Policy

Practicum students can substitute in the practicum classroom for up to three days and receive payment, **as long as they are certified substitutes and have received permission from their USU supervisor**. This is intended as a short-term substitute opportunity, *not* a long-term assignment.



While students employed as substitute teachers in the Level III Practicum are eligible for hours accommodations, substitute teaching hours (in other classrooms and/or schools) **do not apply** towards practicum credit; practicum hours must be completed in the assigned school and practicum classroom.

Key Items to Remember for Practicum Students:

1. Safety is a priority. Review with the mentor teacher correct emergency procedures before they happen. For example, what should be done if there is an altercation in the classroom? *Remember: Practicum students do not physically handle students.*
2. Any student medication (prescribed or over the counter) should be handled by permanent staff.
3. Prior to classroom interactions, review appropriate bathroom procedures and follow school guidelines.
4. If have a lesson that takes you out of the building with children, check with the mentor teacher for permission and ensure that the office staff knows where the students are at all times.
5. Practicum students do not bring family and/or friends to school.
6. Refer students to the office if they need a ride home. *Practicum students never give rides to students.*
7. Review correct procedures when parents/guardians check out their students from the classroom. *Practicum students are not authorized to not release students to parents/guardians.*
8. Familiarize yourself with the current cell phone policy at your assigned school. It is best not to use a phone during school hours, except in cases of emergency.
9. Practicum students should never photograph, video-record, or tape-record students unless approval has been received by the mentor teacher and the student's parent/guardian. This may be in the form of a permission slip that has been collected by the school, or it may be a specific permission slip for the purpose.
10. Practicum students should never post any comments, photos, or videos regarding students or the practicum school or classroom to any social media platform.