

USU Elementary Education Foundations Practicum Handbook



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Foundations Practicum Details

What is the structure of the practicum?

Each student is responsible for one 4-hour block per week for 12 weeks. Ideally this block should either begin 30 minutes before school or end 30 minutes after school; this gives students a behind-the-scenes look at the preparation and reflection that happens when students aren't in the classroom. However, teachers will make available blocks of time when students can be most productive and valuable in the classroom. Students should adhere to the time they have been assigned throughout the semester, with the exception of rescheduling for school holidays.

The practicum day and time should be consistent throughout the semester, with the exception of when students need to make-up a day because of scheduled school holidays or illness. Students will make arrangements to schedule that block via email with their mentor teacher during the first week of classes for the semester. They will begin their practicum the second week of the semester.

Because students are only in the classroom for four hours per week, teachers may be asked to consider mentoring more than one practicum student in a semester. Because of fluctuating enrollment from semester to semester, it is difficult for us to predict precise numbers of students before the first week of classes. A student will be assigned to each volunteer mentor teacher's classroom before we ask teachers to consider mentoring an additional student. If two students are assigned to one classroom, those students should not be scheduled to attend practicum at the same time, but should do so on different days.

What will practicum students do?

Students can and should do any or all of the tasks listed on the Foundations Practicum Checklist of Experiences (see *page 8*). Students are responsible for responding to weekly journal prompts about what they are learning in their practicum and filling in a weekly timecard, identifying the date and time of their practicum attendance. These will be completed by students at home and submitted to their professor weekly.

At the end of the semester, students will ask mentor teachers to sign a simple one-page assessment of their completion of practicum and attention to professional behaviors during their practicum experience (see *pages 3–6* for a list of the professional behaviors we have communicated to students). Students will turn these forms in to their professor at the end of the semester.



What is the purpose of the Foundations Practicum?

Students in the Foundations Practicum are in the very early stages of their coursework in the Elementary Education program. It is our philosophy that teacher education should involve continual opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with children in the classroom, beginning when they enter the program and culminating in their student teaching and that those experiences should have increased opportunities for responsibility as they progress in the program.

In this first practicum experience, we intend for students to begin thinking deeply about the work of teachers, the relationship between school and society and their own educational philosophy. All of these objectives are met best when students are able to learn from master teachers at work in their own classrooms.

What if I have a concern about the behavior of my assigned practicum student?

Logan campus: Please contact Dr. Emma Mecham, the Foundations Practicum instructor, at 435-797-8435 or emma.mecham@usu.edu; or Karli Fish, the practicum coordinator, at 435-797-4260 or karli.fish@usu.edu.

Statewide campuses: Please contact Dr. Shireen Keyl, the Foundations Practicum instructor, at 435-797-5647 or shireen.keyl@usu.edu; or Karli Fish, the practicum coordinator, at 435-797-4260 or karli.fish@usu.edu.



Professional Behavior Guidelines

In keeping with [Standard 10, Professional and Ethical Behavior, of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards](#), the following guidelines should be followed during practicum experiences, including student teaching or internships.

Maintain Records Daily (Students' and Mentor Teacher's)

Practicum students are expected to maintain up-to-date, organized, and legible records, and will complete all required record keeping before leaving the practicum site each scheduled day. Record keeping must be consistent with the mentor teacher's verbal or written direction. All records must contain a date and signature and/or name of the person producing the documentation. Practicum students must avoid leaving records in open areas of the classroom or in locations unknown to the teacher. If applicable, communicate to the mentor teacher the location of records before leaving.

Maintain Confidentiality of Information and Records

Federal law requires educational agencies to guarantee each student basic privacy rights. To maintain these rights, agencies are required to have guidelines for collecting, maintaining, disseminating, and verifying the accuracy of information that they collect. 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, university instructor, 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.

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 language 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 modest, clean, and in good repair. The practicum student must dress in a way to be consistent with the dress of the majority of teachers and administrators in the same school.

In all cases, unacceptable clothing consists of halter tops, shorts, thongs, flip flops, worn or ripped jeans, bare midriffs, and low-cut tops. Shoes should be selected to allow rapid movement between students, provide protection from chairs and heavy objects, and establish balance necessary for lifting. 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 requires wearing of a photo ID name tag unless the mentor teacher requests it be removed in the classroom (if so, the ID must be worn in other school areas).

Respond Favorably to Constructive 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. Students are encouraged to ask questions for clarification. However, it is imperative the student accept feedback, acknowledge need for improvement, and immediately implement recommended changes.

Implement Changes After Feedback Is Provided

After receiving feedback, it is imperative the practicum student implement changes as recommended. It is also important the student seek out the university supervisor, mentor teacher, and other school personnel who initially provided the feedback to receive additional input on whether implementation is correct.



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, or family, or for court appearance. Health impairment is a trauma requiring hospitalization, emergency attention from a physician, or emergency appointment with a physician. An illness is a debilitating health condition or communicable virus. A family emergency refers to death or hospitalization of an immediate family member. A court appearance is a court trial requiring testimony or jury duty. Excluded from the list of acceptable absences are minor health concerns, weddings or other events involving family members, health problems of family members, illness of a child (unless prior approval is provided by the mentor teacher), attendance at court trials without subpoena, conflicts with work schedule, etc. If questions arise, contact your mentor teacher **prior to the absence**.

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 must immediately report tardiness and unexcused absences to the university supervisor.

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, a meeting between the mentor teacher, university supervisor, and practicum student will be held to discuss the problem. Following this meeting, the university supervisor and chairperson of the undergraduate committee 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.



Practicum Students Must Avoid the Following Practices:

1. DO NOT give any student medication, prescribed or over-the-counter, unless you have received authorized instruction by the school district and your name appears on the health care plan for the individual student.
2. DO NOT physically handle students unless you have been authorized by the teacher to do so and physical assistance is an approved level of assistance for an instructional or behavior management program. (Note: Written documentation must be provided for Levels II-IV behavior intervention according to USBE LRBI policy, as well as training for each teacher, practicum student, or other adult using Levels II-IV procedures.)
3. DO NOT 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.
4. DO NOT post any comments, photos or videos (see #3 above) regarding your practicum placement on any social media site.
5. DO NOT take students outside the school grounds with you unless you have been approved to do so by the mentor teacher.
6. DO NOT take anyone with you i.e., children, your children, husband, friend, etc., without permission into school.
7. DO NOT offer to provide transportation for any student using your own vehicle.
8. DO NOT release any student to an adult claiming to be a parent, guardian, relative, or other responsible person (even if shown an identification) without first checking with the mentor classroom teacher or the school office.
9. DO NOT assist any students with any toileting needs on your own, without a mentor teacher, or other school personnel.
10. DO NOT use your cell phone. It is a department policy that student teachers refrain from all cell phone use while on school property. This policy requires students turn off cell phones upon entering the school. Please give family members and child care providers the school phone to use in the event of an emergency. Violations of this policy will result in an immediate meeting with the university supervisor, mentor teacher, and student to decide on the course of disciplinary action.



Foundations Practicum Checklist of Experiences

Foundations practicum students should be encouraged to work directly with children as much as possible. We do not, however, want these students to be creating and teaching whole group lessons. We want our students to take advantage of the expert knowledge that you possess which will require some careful observation with reflection.

We also know that it may be difficult at times to think of opportunities for practicum students. The following checklist suggests activities that Foundations Practicum students could be expected to accomplish. However, **they are not expected to complete this entire checklist (75% would be a reasonable goal)**. We suggest the following activities:

Read aloud to children
Listen to children read
Explain instructional material
Check mastery of skills
Records children's stories
Instruct small groups (simple activities)
Observe other teachers (eg. special education, P.E., music)
Conduct storytelling time
Conference with students about their writing
Teach simple mini-lessons
Help children develop plays, puppets, drama
Respond to journals
Conduct spelling activities, games, etc.
Help evaluate spelling
Introduce manipulative activities
Share alternative ways to problem solve
Help with individual work
Prepare materials
Plan simple activities
Distribute supplies/equipment
Help children individually
Create activities to integrate into the curriculum
Arrange displays/exhibits

Locate resource people
Locate resource materials
Work with individuals and small groups
Locate references
Conduct experiments
Work with or design experiments
Create learning centers
Help children form teams/groups
Explain/demonstrate an activity or use of equipment
Present game rules
Lead exercises/games/activities
Keep score/referee
Assist teacher with supervisory duties
Take attendance, lunch count, etc.
Keep records of grades
Manage library time
Prepare displays of student work
Share special talents in any curriculum area
Prepare and lead activities to enrich or extend the curriculum
Review concepts previously learned
Assist students who need extra help with concepts
Lead the class in checking assignments



Foundations Practicum Mentor Teacher Evaluation Form

Teacher Candidate: _____ Grade or Subject: _____

Evaluator Name: _____

Did the pre-service teacher candidate complete each of the thirteen 4-hour sessions in your classroom that they were assigned, making up any sick days or school holidays?	YES	NO
Comments:		
Did the pre-service teacher candidate behave professionally during their time in your classroom (i.e., punctual, focused, professionally dressed, with appropriate self-presentation)?	YES	NO
Comments:		
Did the pre-service teacher candidate communicate appropriately and effectively with you and others in the school (including other teachers, aides, staff, administrators, students and parents?)	YES	NO
Comments:		
Do you have concerns about the dispositions, attitudes, behaviors or performance of this pre-service teacher?	YES	NO
Comments:		

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mentor Signature: _____ Date: _____