

LIAISON SCHOOL MODEL

Overview

The Liaison School Model represents our approach to the field experience and student teaching components of the teacher education program. Throughout the Western New York community, the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) has relationships with various preK-12 school districts with whom we work collaboratively to provide intensive, mentored field experience and student teaching opportunities for our students preparing to become intellectually-curious, critically-reflective, and practically-informed educators for the profession of teaching.

Each liaison school consists of a team, as follows:

- A **teacher education associate** (TEA) from UB who teaches the fall semester field experience and the spring semester seminar in teaching courses, and observes and provides feedback and evaluation throughout the spring semester student teaching placements;
- A school-based **liaison** who coordinates the fall semester field experience course with the TEA, assists the TEA to obtain cooperating teachers for each assigned preservice teacher, and assists the cooperating teachers in their mentoring of student teachers;
- A group of teachers who begin working with preservice teachers in the fall semester in relation to the field experience course; some of these teachers will continue as **cooperating teachers** in the spring semester for a student teaching placement;
- A group of **preservice teachers**, typically from a variety of certification areas, registered for the field experience course in the fall semester preceding their spring semester student teaching (most preservice teachers will be placed in their liaison school site for a student teaching placement; however, due to logistics, some preservice teachers will be placed in other school sites for both of their student teaching placements).

Immersion at the liaison school affords the following benefits to the preservice teacher:

- A thorough understanding of the school community;
- Extensive and varied interactions with students, faculty, and staff prior to the start of student teaching;
- The development of a dynamic mentoring relationship with the TEA and cooperating teacher;
- A forum for discussion and professional development among peers and future colleagues;
- A smooth transition to student teaching that promotes optimal learning for students.

The classroom teacher and her/his students benefit in a variety of ways. During the fall semester field experience course, through her/his participation in the classroom, the preservice teacher will become an additional resource to complement the teacher's instruction and facilitate the students' learning. This carries over to student teaching, wherein the preservice teacher is able to readily engage in the placement because s/he has developed a relationship with the teacher and her/his students and has gained knowledge of the school and its curriculum. Many cooperating teachers inform us that they enjoy this opportunity to work directly with prospective teachers, because it energizes their teaching and allows them to participate in and influence the beginning professional development of those studying to become educators. This is echoed by preK-12 school and district leaders, who additionally inform us that because this model fosters the sharing of ideas and expectations, it promotes a smoother transition to teaching and supports their efforts of teacher recruitment and retention.

Purpose of the Field Experience Course

The field experience course is a key component in the initial teacher certification course sequence. Preservice teachers register for this course in the semester immediately preceding the semester for which they will apply to student teach. A primary goal of the fall semester field experience is for preservice teachers to begin to develop their professional identity as an educator as a means to prepare for successful student teaching experiences in the spring semester. Through extensive involvement that

includes observation, participation, reflection, and discussion, students enrolled in the field experience course are expected to demonstrate the following:

- Connect theory and practice by exploring the ways in which their developing content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge relate to teaching and learning in Western New York preK-12 classrooms, schools, and communities;
- Think, talk, and write critically about teaching and learning in micro and macro contexts;
- Understand school cultures and communities, with a focus on diversity within these settings;
- Create a beginning sense of self as a teacher;
- Build professional relationships.

Content of the Field Experience Class Meetings

Field experience situations vary, and therefore the course content varies according to the given situation. Each TEA group and each preservice teacher within each TEA group will have a unique learning experience. In general, field experience class meetings are held during a four-hour block one day per week and are located initially at UB and then moved into the liaison school for the balance of the semester. At the liaison school, these classes are taught by the TEA with assistance from the school-based liaison.

While at the liaison school for a scheduled class meeting, each preservice teacher is expected to do the following:

- Be fully prepared to participate throughout the entire class meeting;
- Engage in classroom observations and work directly with preK-12 students and teachers;
- Meet with school personnel;
- Discuss the day's participation/observations/meetings with the TEA and the other preservice teachers.

The classroom observations (which will be co-arranged by the TEA and the school-based liaison) are across a range of subjects, grade levels, and academic levels.

The meetings with school personnel (also co-arranged by the TEA and the school-based liaison) are with staff representing a variety of positions (Principal, Assistant Principal, Nurse, Special Education Teacher, Social Worker, School Counselor, Technology Specialist, Library Media Specialist, Literacy Specialist, recent UB initial teacher certification program completers, newly hired teachers, members of the hiring team, etc.).

Classroom Contact Hours

The New York State Education Department requires *at least* 100 classroom contact hours (*100 hours is a minimum that each preservice teacher is expected to exceed*) during field experience prior to the beginning of student teaching, *at least* 15 of which must be focused on understanding the needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, in order to advance to student teaching, each preservice teacher must successfully participate in *at least* 100 classroom contact hours (*again, we expect students to exceed the State minimum*).

To some extent, the classroom contact hours are arranged by the TEA and the school-based liaison, but each preservice teacher is expected to demonstrate initiative by beginning to make professional contacts with teachers at the assigned school, and, as directed by her/his TEA and the school-based liaison, arrange her/his own classroom contact hours.

Each preservice teacher will complete her/his classroom contact hours as follows:

- During scheduled field experience class meetings held at the liaison school;
- Outside of scheduled field experience class meetings, but within the preservice teacher's assigned liaison school with her/his cooperating teacher(s) and/or other teachers in her/his certification area (approximately 4-6 hours per week throughout the weeks during the semester s/he is at her/his liaison school – for these hours, s/he must have flexibility in her/his schedule to be able to be at a liaison school at times agreeable to the teacher(s) with whom s/he will be working);
- Three full days in which s/he will 'shadow' her/his prospective cooperating teacher(s).

The hours outside of scheduled field experience class meetings will be within the assigned school(s) with the intended cooperating teacher(s) and/or other teachers in applicable certification areas. And, the hours may include some observation of others' work, but more so they are intended to be interactive (*rather than 'observation' hours, these are 'contact' hours*). **It is expected that the preservice teacher becomes an involved participant in the classroom(s) during these hours as a means to contribute to the classroom(s) and to learn as much as possible during this time** (this may include tutoring, lab and/or group facilitation, 'mini' teaching, co-teaching, etc.). This is also the primary time for preservice teachers to conduct observations for the Reflective Inquiry Project.