

How Should We Begin the Year?

At the beginning of the school year, a teacher helps the class become a functioning organization by establishing rules and routines for interaction in the classroom, by learning about and building relationships with pupils, by laying out plans for the work for the semester or year, and by beginning that work. The teacher is explicit, specific, and thorough in laying out expectations and plans.

At the beginning of the school year, the intern, collaborating teacher, field instructor and 800-level course instructors make themselves a functioning organization in much the same way—by building relationships, establishing rules and routines for their interaction, setting out a plan for the work of helping the intern to learn both to teach and to grow as a teacher, and by getting started on it. The CT, intern, field instructor and course instructors should be explicit, specific, and thorough about how they will work together.

Orient the intern. Starting the first week of school, interns should have opportunities to do the following:

- talk with collaborating teachers about their classroom “vision”—their expectations, goals, curriculum for the year;
- draw a map of the classroom, make a daily schedule, and talk with the teacher about how time and space are organized in this classroom and why;
- assist, observe, and take notes about opening days of school as a basis for studying the development of a classroom learning community;
- get to know the names of all students in the classroom;
- spend some individual time with each student and keep notes about students’ interests, families, concerns, friends, etc.
- study and take responsibility for at least one recurring classroom event and/or procedure (e.g. taking attendance, checking homework);
- meet with the principal;
- tour the school and community;
- attend faculty meetings, orientations, etc.;
- become familiar with material available in the classroom and school library;
- and meet other school personnel.

Make time to talk. In the long run, it is essential that the collaborating teacher and intern set regular times to talk than to fix the problems likely to result from not having talked. Interns and CT’s need to make the same time commitments to developing their professional work together as team teachers do.

What is automatic and second nature for experienced teachers often is not obvious to interns. The more explicit collaborating teachers can be about the reasons why they do what they do, the more they can help interns feel comfortable asking about those reasons, the more they can support the interns in learning to teach. Through conversation, collaborating teachers should help interns develop a broad view of the classroom, an understanding of their goals and expectations for students, and a sense of how these values get translated into concrete activities, assignments, etc.

Co-planning and co-teaching: Start small, but start. In the first week or two of school, the collaborating teacher is likely to be engrossed in getting the class going at the beginning of the year. “Co-planning” will consist mainly of the collaborating teacher’s telling her or his plans to the intern teacher. That is valuable, both because it informs the intern about the CT’s thinking and helps the intern to be helpful. “Co-teaching” is likely to mean that the collaborating teacher is doing most of the work of teaching, and that the intern is helping out here and there, in such ways as leading a routine, copying some material, offering suggestions about additional materials that fit with the CT’s planned units, working with a small group, or working with an individual student. That’s valuable, because having a teaching role or a supportive role in planning, albeit a small one, helps the intern to see classroom activity from a teacher’s point of view. Over time, the intern’s part both in planning and in teaching should grow gradually.

Taking over routines. As part of the series of Opening Tasks interns will engage in and discuss in the beginning weeks of the TE 501 Seminar, the interns will prepare lesson plans for various classroom routines. As the CT and intern feel the intern is ready (including having a written plan developed), the intern can gradually begin taking over specified routines.

Working as a team. In the collaborating teacher, we have a person who is steeped in the local knowledge of the school and the classroom, who works with the intern every day, and who thus is in a good position to promote and notice an intern’s development on a daily basis. In the field instructor, we have a person who is working with several interns and is attending regular meetings on program standards, course work, and procedures, and who thus is in a good position to suggest how the program should work and how the standards can be applied consistently over time. Our aim should be to have the intern benefit from the resources both bring to the internship, not to put them into competition (where the intern could be caught between them).

What Should We Aim For? Program Standards

In recent years, every major teachers’ organization has joined other parties in calls for a powerful practice of school teaching that has been described repeatedly in proposals and standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A responsible teacher preparation program must attend to those standards.

The teacher preparation program centered at MSU has done so both in its design and in the following standards for interns. These standards, which were developed by university faculty and collaborating teachers, compactly represent understandings, skills, commitments, dispositions that are needed to be an effective and responsible beginning teacher today.

The Standards

Standards 1: Knowing Subject Matters and How to Teach Them

- The intern understands the subject matter(s) as needed to teach it (them).
- The intern thoughtfully links subject matter and students, creating a responsive curriculum.
- The intern implements a curriculum of understanding.
- The intern is thoughtful about assessment and its relationship to planning and teaching.

Standard 2: Working with Students

- The intern respects and cares for *all* students in his/her charge.
- The intern promotes active learning and thoughtfulness.

- The intern builds on students' interests, strengths, and cultural backgrounds.
- The intern treats all students as capable of learning.

Standard 3: Creating and managing a classroom learning community

- The intern creates a safe, caring, productive environment in the classroom.
- The intern makes the classroom an inclusive community.
- The intern helps students develop personal and social responsibility.

Standard 4: Working and learning in a school and profession

- The intern works well as a teacher in a school community.
- The intern works productively with his/her MSU liaison, collaborating teacher, field instructor and course instructors in ways that support his/her learning to teach.
- The intern reflects on his/her experience and seeks opportunities for continued learning and improvement.
- The intern is open to alternatives and constructive feedback.

Applying the standards. During the fall semester, we seek evidence that interns are making satisfactory PROGRESS in EACH of the Program Standards. A recommendation for continuing the internship experience will be based on the professional judgment of the field instructor, the collaborating teacher, and relevant others who are familiar with the intern's teaching practice.

- In order to be recommended for teacher certification by the end of the internship year, an intern will need to show that she or he is capable of responsible, autonomous teaching based on the Program Standards. During the spring semester we seek evidence that the interns have met the Program Standards and are ready to assume the responsibilities of beginning teaching.

Teaching Subject Matters

TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD, INTERNS SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TO:

- Plan, teach, and evaluate units that regularly engage children in WRITING for AUTHENTIC purposes and audiences and in TALKING WITH EACH OTHER about their writing.
- Plan, teach, and evaluate units that engage children in READING high quality children's literature and in TALKING WITH THEIR CLASSMATES about their responses to that literature.
- Plan, teach, and evaluate units that support children in learning to LISTEN critically, analytically, and appreciatively and to SPEAK their own ideas with clarity and confidence.
- Plan, teach, and evaluate units that INTEGRATE the LANGUAGE ARTS (e.g., reading and writing processes support each other; children speak and listen to each other about oral, written, and visual texts).
- Plan, teach, and evaluate MATHEMATICS units that are carefully focused on important CONCEPTS, that pay serious attention to CHILDREN'S mathematical ideas and theories; that actively engage children in DOING, WRITING about mathematics; and that challenge and foster their MEANING-MAKING about mathematics.

- Plan, teach, and evaluate SCIENCE units that are carefully focused on important CONCEPTS, that pay serious attention to CHILDREN'S SCIENTIFIC IDEAS AND THEORIES, and that combine hands-on ACTIVITIES and scientific DISCUSSIONS to promote CONCEPTUAL CHANGE learning.
- Plan, teach, and evaluate SOCIAL STUDIES lessons and units that are carefully focused on IMPORTANT CONCEPTS, that pay serious attention to CHILDREN'S IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES, that incorporate class DISCUSSIONS of stimulating texts, and that challenge and foster their CRITICAL THINKING skills.
- Integrate the ARTS (music, art, movement, dramatics) into units across the curriculum.
- Construct, try, and evaluate AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS that both REVEAL AND DOCUMENT students' learning, and that are useful both in EVALUATING ONE'S OWN TEACHING and in COMMUNICATING with parents and others.

Working with Students

TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD, INTERNS SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TO:

- Plan and teach LESSONS that are designed to be COHERENT AND HIGHLY ENGAGING for students, and then GATHER AND ANALYZE INFORMATION that would enable the intern to access how the students ACTUALLY DID experience the lesson.
- Devise and practice strategies for VALUING CHILDREN'S IDEAS, QUESTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES and hearing their voices with respect, and then GATHER AND ANALYZE INFORMATION that would enable the intern to assess whether the intern indeed did hear and work with the students' ideas.
- Explore the problems and opportunities that STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS face in the classroom, figure out how to ADAPT INSTRUCTION to include those students, and ASSESS THOSE ADAPTATIONS.
- Explore how students from different histories, cultures, and communities might respond differently to their teaching practices, figure out how to ADAPT INSTRUCTION to include those students, and ASSESS THOSE ADAPTATIONS.
- Devise and practice strategies intended to MODEL A LOVE OF LEARNING for students, and then GATHER AND ANALYZE INFORMATION that would enable the intern to assess how the students DID interpret those strategies.

Creating a Classroom Learning Community

TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD, INTERNS SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TO:

- Devise, practice, and evaluate CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES that are consistent with and SUPPORTIVE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS suggested above.
- Devise, practice, and evaluate strategies for promoting and evaluating students' SELF-REGULATED LEARNING.
- Devise, practice, and evaluate strategies for involving and evaluating students in TALK-ORIENTED SMALL GROUP LEARNING.
- Devise, practice, and evaluate strategies for engaging students in GENUINE DISCUSSIONS of intriguing questions and problems.

- Devise and practice strategies for encouraging students to be TOLERANT and SUPPORTIVE of each other.

Working and Learning in a School and Profession

TO ACHIEVE THIS STANDARD, INTERNS SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TO:

- ASK EXPERIENCED TEACHERS THEIR RATIONALES for their practices and, with the teachers' assistance, to examine those rationales to possibly base their own practice upon.
- Plan and evaluate units and lessons WITH experienced teachers, so that interns gain an inside view of experienced teachers' reasoning, and are supported in developing their own reasoning about teaching.
- Explore a variety of lesson, daily, unit, and annual planning formats with practicing teachers.
- CO-TEACH units and lessons with experienced teachers, so that the interns can use the teachers' routines, assistance, and relationships with students to teach better lessons than they yet can teach by themselves.
- Teach units and lessons ON THEIR OWN, with WRITTEN FEEDBACK from and DISCUSSION with experienced teachers acting as coaches or clinical supervisors.

Plan and carry out ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS in which they POSE QUESTIONS about teaching and learning, undertake study and action to answer that question, and learn systematically from that activity.