

How Should We Handle Trouble?

First and foremost, we should understand and agree that trouble is normal in the internship. A novice--the intern--is trying to learn to do complex, subtle and difficult work. The intern, collaborating teacher, and field instructor are trying to have a productive working relationship in challenging circumstances: The working relationships must keep changing with the interns' growth, and the participants must achieve this shifting relationship the only time they will do it together.

Therefore, trouble is normal in the internship. It is NOT something to be embarrassed about. It MIGHT be something- to be worried about. Mostly, it is just something to DEAL WITH and move on.

Because trouble is normal in the internship, the program has normal arrangements for dealing with it. This section describes some of those normal arrangements. It also should persuade you to use those arrangements early and without embarrassment. Please remember that:

- ALL OF THE PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH ANY INTERN WANT THAT INTERN TO SUCCEED.
- INVOLVING SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE IN A PROBLEMATIC SITUATION IS NEITHER A CONFESSION OF INCOMPETENCE NOR A CALL FOR PUNISHMENT. IT IS, RATHER, AN ATTEMPT TO SOLVE A PROBLEM IN ORDER TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP.

Common troubles; potential remedies. The left column in the following table describes some common early problems that might point to more serious difficulties later in the year. All interns will be in some of these troubles at times, due to the normal anxiety and stress of taking on new responsibilities and working with extensive feedback from others.

The right column of the table provides some suggestions for responding to those signs of trouble. Much of the time, early attention of the modest sorts suggested first in each box will support improvements. But not always. In that case, you may need to take the more substantial steps that involve others who work with or have responsibilities for the intern. At some time, you might need to invoke the conflict- resolution procedure that is described in the section after the table.

Situations	Potential actions
<p>Basic interaction difficulties: doesn't make eye contact with kids or engage them in interaction; keeps too much distance from students; doesn't notice what's going on with children that calls for a change in activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • videotape the intern, and view and discuss the tape with the intern • have the intern work with individuals and small groups for a while to build confidence and ease with the student and teacher interaction • having the intern find ways to interact with kids during recess or lunch to provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to build communication • set specific objectives for eye contact, interaction with students, monitoring of student work, etc., and follow through.
<p>Avoiding or rejecting constructive, constructively-given feedback: being defensive, blaming others, always having an excuse—or saying yes to feedback but not changing anything</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a frank conversation about the situation using concrete illustrations that help the intern understand the problem and the specific behaviors that need to be changed • find out what receiving criticism means to the intern; tell what it means to you and other professionals • make and discuss the distinction between talking about practices and their consequences versus talking about persons and their competence. • renew expectation that feedback will be given, and how that will be done, and how the intern will respond to it. • call for a three-way conference among the intern, collaborating teacher, and field instructor to emphasize the importance of the situation and increase the resources devoted to solving the problem

<p>not meeting expectations or keeping agreements: doesn't produce plans before teaching, doesn't have a lesson plan when you observe, agrees to do things but doesn't do them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore with the intern ways that professionals make sure they get things done, such as writing down expectations and deadlines or keeping a calendar specifically for commitments. • have a frank conversation including feedback about the situation, clearly outlining the consequences for not following through. • ask for a three-way conference...
<p>persistent problems with relationships with students: trying to be students' buddy, not setting appropriate boundaries for interaction, avoiding or resisting the authoritative parts of the teacher's role and practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss specifically how a friendly demeanor and respect for students as persons can be reconciled with authoritative acts by teachers. • assign specific authoritative roles or responsibilities in particular situations, for protected practice, and tell the intern why you are doing so. • if the intern sees this as a matter of deep principle, let the intern run the class according to his or her principles for an hour or day and video-tape; then view the tape and discuss with the intern
<p>expresses unrealistic views of teaching and doesn't adjust to the current situation: says "that's not my style" blames students or others, saying s/he would be just fine in a different setting; shows that s/he does not yet realize how much work and what kinds of work are involved in teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a frank conversation with feedback ... • ask the intern to join you in a serious and specific assessment of the actual probability that things would be different somewhere else. • discuss the proposition that having something to learn is not the same thing as incompetence. • plan a weekly schedule with the intern, set deadlines for work, and talk about the problem that this is intended to address.
<p>takes no initiative in planning or in the classroom: relies heavily or completely on CT's directions; produces no ideas about what to do, doesn't spend necessary time and effort</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a frank conversation with feedback... • try to find out how taking no initiative might seem right or necessary to the intern, and address that reasoning. list some concrete possibilities for situations where the intern can work on taking initiative and set some clear expectations in writing. discuss the proposition that there's no way to do it perfectly the first time... • have brainstorming sessions to demonstrate that initiative calls more for work than inspiration. • identify other forms of support that the intern may need to participate more fully.
<p>resists professional responsibility, responsibility for own learning: coming in tired, late, or unprepared, absent a lot; inappropriate dress; doing only what is required, not trying to find connection between course work and classroom work, not engaging the CT about teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a frank conversation with feedback... • ask sincerely if the intern actually wants to teach school, or may have entered into teacher education for other reasons. • ask how life other than school is going. • invite the intern to switch roles appraise his or her own performance. • make and record specific expectations; follow up.
<p>doesn't get organized: wastes time, uses time poorly; doesn't seem to have plans, calendars or lists; frequently does things at last minute; forgets meetings, doesn't deliver materials as agreed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the intern's work and study habits; ask if they need to change and, if so, how. • discuss specific ways in which professionals manage to cope with the many competing demands on their time and attention. Explore which strategies will be most helpful to intern, given his or her habits. • make plans with dates and deadlines, work out time lines, establish deadlines for drafts, planning, etc. Put it in writing.
<p>avoids conversation: never raises questions, concerns, issues, or interests; if asked, says everything is fine; doesn't respond to attempts to converse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try informal conversations about other topics to develop trust. • have frank conversation about standard regarding

	<p>reflection on teaching, making sure the intern understands what reflective behavior looks like.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try guided fast writes using questions such as What went well? What didn't? What would I do differently? • During seminar, ask interns anonymously to write problems they have had in classroom for group discussion.
<p>over-confidence: thinks s/he already knows; wants to jump right into it, just do it; resists observations, co-planning, and reflecting on teaching; only hears positive feedback, won't accept negative comments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • let the intern try something and use the experience to reflect on areas needing growth, and whether and how similar experiences would be the most helpful next step for the intern's learning. • ask for written journals to promote analysis and reflection in relation to professional learning. • have a frank conversation about what the intern hopes to achieve by "just teaching" as the main part of the internship, and how additional professional experiences can enhance the intern's learning.
<p>perfectionist to a fault: worries about every little thing; at school more time than is consistent with health; doesn't finish things because they are never good enough; hears and produces only criticism, not praise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss this proposition: If it is worth doing, it is worth doing only moderately well. • ask to see fast writes, drafts, and other unfinished products to understand what the intern's specific concerns are • ask for small self-evaluations that accentuate the positive • discuss what "learning to teach" means to find out why "perfection" is the main standard; help the intern focus on particular standards in smaller pieces.