

The Program Standards in Practice

The process of evaluating and assessing interns' progress over the course of the year can be a difficult and complicated process. The MSU Teacher Preparation Program Standards are in place to both provide interns with aspirations as they grow and develop professionally, and guide those who work with them to provide the interns with appropriate opportunities and assessment framework. Trying to envision what the standards look like in practice can prove to be difficult. The following is not intended to be the "authoritative" guide to what the standards mean, but a launching point for exploring what it meant to be a successful teacher intern, and the ways in which those who work with them can assist in the process.

Aspirations to Discuss With Interns

This is NOT a checklist or evaluation form. It IS a list of aspirations for teaching that mentor teachers, field instructors, and interns usefully could discuss. It is organized by the same categories and sub-categories as the Program Standards, and so might help interns, mentor teachers, and field instructors to understand what the categories in the evaluation worksheets mean.

Standard 1: Knowing Subject Matters and How to Teach Them

The intern understands the subject matter(s) as needed to teach it (them) to students.

- The intern knows and understands the main goals, core concepts, important information, tools of inquiry, and important practices of the disciplines that s/he teaches.
- The intern understands how the disciplines that s/he teaches are applied, used, practiced, and enjoyed in various settings and enterprises outside the school, and can make connections between the subject matter and his own life.
- The intern monitors and assesses his own understanding of the subject matter, notices when his own understanding is inadequate for teaching, and uses a variety of resources for support and to continue learning about the subject matter.
- The intern represents subject matter knowledge and ways of knowing accurately and appropriately in teaching.
- The intern knows what is likely to be difficult for students and finds ways to address those difficulties.

The intern plans and implements a curriculum of understanding.

The intern thoughtfully links subject matter and students, creating a responsive curriculum.

- The intern identifies central concepts, information, and skills that are critical for students to understand, and sets instructional goals accordingly.
- The intern frames worthwhile purposes that take into account district and/or school curriculum guidelines, subject matter standards (e.g., NCTM), and students' backgrounds, learning needs, and interests.
- The intern considers a wide range of teaching resources, evaluating their appropriateness and making necessary adaptations.
- The intern integrates or connects subject matter areas where appropriate.

- The intern constructs units and lessons that make the core aims, central concepts, important information, tools of inquiry, and important practices of a discipline meaningful for students.
- The intern combines questions, tasks, materials, and participation structures that will engage students, stimulate and support their thinking, organize their in-depth exploration of topics, and otherwise promote genuine understanding.
- The intern plans coherent units and lessons that have beginnings, middles, and endings; that are connected sensibly to preceding and following units and lessons; that are connected sensibly to other subjects; and that suit the place and the time of year.
- The intern provides good reasons for his or her decisions about content and instruction.

The intern is thoughtful about assessment and its relationship to planning and teaching.

- Prior to instruction, the intern finds out what students already know, believe, or feel about the matter to be taught; figures out how that prior experience is likely to affect instruction; and plans accordingly.
- The intern monitors, documents, and studies individual and group work throughout the course of instruction, and uses that information to make decisions about what to do next.
- The intern constructs or selects assessment tasks (assignments, tests, questions, etc.) that allow and require students to show their understanding, e.g., ability to connect ideas, use ideas, solve problems, apply skills.
- In evaluating students' work, the intern distinguishes between genuine understanding and other performances (going through the motions, memorizing for the test, etc.).
- The intern treats assessments as information not only about student learning but also as information about the quality of instruction, and acts accordingly.
- The intern gives students written and oral feedback in a timely manner that focuses on supporting learning, as distinct from simply giving a grade.

Standard 2: Working with Students

The intern builds on students' interests, strengths, and cultural backgrounds.

- The intern teaches coherent lessons that are organized about some framework, have a clear aim and focus, proceed reasonably from a thoughtful beginning to a thoughtful ending, and keep all students involved.
- The intern leads class discussions that explore problems and ideas, that elicit diverse responses from many students, and that get students to think.
- The intern helps the students to make connections between new content and prior learning.
- The intern asks appropriate and stimulating questions, listens carefully, and responds thoughtfully to student's ideas, comments, and questions.

- The intern adjusts or adapts lessons to accommodate students' individual needs and abilities and to include all students in class activities.
- The intern adapts her own role to the activity that s/he is trying to produce among students, e.g., tries to figure out when to talk and when to listen in a class discussion.
- The intern monitors and checks for students' understanding (prior knowledge, throughout lesson) and flexibly adjust her plans in response to students' actions and other contingencies.

The intern promotes active learning and thoughtfulness.

The intern treats all students as capable of learning.

- The intern values and respects each student's thinking and actively elicits and considers students' thinking in planning and teaching.
- The intern demonstrates curiosity about what students already know, what they are thinking, and how they understand or make sense of what they are learning.
- The intern understands and uses a variety of approaches to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
- The intern seeks and uses information about students' prior knowledge in planning. The intern builds on information about student understanding gained from such tasks for further planning.
- The intern continually elicits and responds to student ideas in order to shape and challenge student understanding. The intern thinks about: How are students making sense of this? How are they going astray?
- The intern connects class topics, materials and activities to students' out-of-school activities and experiences.
- The intern understands how to motivate students to learn and how to maintain students' interest even in the face of temporary failure.

The intern respects and cares for all of the students placed in his or her charge.

- The intern treats all students as capable of learning, focuses on their capacities and strengths rather than on their deficits and weaknesses, and strives to create conditions in which they can learn.
- The intern interacts and communicates clearly with students, making students feel cared for and listened to.
- The intern seeks ways to encourage all students to participate in the activities of the class.
- The intern understands how children learn and develop, and organizes activities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
- The intern uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the students.
- The intern discovers relevant differences among students, accommodates those differences or uses them as resources in the classroom, and modifies the task or environment as needed to support students' continued involvement in learning.

- The intern learns about students' interests, strengths, and cultural backgrounds in order to connect class topics and activities to students' experiences (and interact with them effectively).
- The intern understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
- The intern takes particular care on behalf of students who face particular challenges in school, e.g., student with learning disabilities, students who have been victims of discrimination to date.
- The intern effectively uses outside resources (home, school, community) to support students' learning and to deal with their problems.

Standard 3: Creating a Classroom Learning Community

The intern creates a safe, caring, and productive environment in the classroom.

- The intern develops and refines a clear and reasonable approach to classroom management, and plans specifically for the management of instruction and students.
- The intern's classroom management strategies match and support his/her instructional goals. The intern analyzes and works to improve the fit between classroom management strategies and instructional goals.
- The intern establishes and maintains regular routines for classroom activity.
- The intern establishes consequences for inappropriate behavior that are fair and appropriate, and follows through on the consequences.
- The intern develops shared values and expectations with students regarding their interactions, academic work, and individual and group responsibilities.
- The intern organizes and introduces activities so that students are prepared for them and can carry them out successfully.

The intern makes the class an inclusive community.

- The intern creates an environment that supports and respects inquiry, exploration, and intellectual risk-taking.
- The intern actively engages students together in making sense of meaningful concepts and skills.
- The intern employs a variety of participation structures (whole group, small group, individual, etc.) that suit the lesson goals and tasks.
- The intern creates a classroom learning environment in which students and teachers are jointly engaged in developing shared expectations and/or standards for their joint work.
- The intern understands and builds appropriate connections between learning community qualities and subject matter goals.
- The intern helps students to learn to work alone and with others and to participate in decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

- The intern uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and media communications techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- The intern models effective communication when presenting ideas and information and asking questions, and promotes effective communication among students.

The intern helps students develop personal and social responsibility.

- The intern sets norms for social interaction among students that foster respect and cooperation.
- The intern uses multiple strategies (e.g., nonverbal cues, proximity, voice) to manage student behavior and keep students on task.
- The intern helps students to understand rules and routines and to learn to follow them.
- The intern employs management strategies that encourage personal responsibility and self-motivation in students.
- The intern deals with minor disruptive behavior such as talking inappropriately in reasonable and consistent ways that regain students' attention and keep the class moving.
- The intern works with students who have severe behavioral or emotional problems in an organized and professional way that helps them to develop and follow through on reasonable plans to overcome their problems.

Standard 4: Working and Learning In A School And Profession

The intern works well as a teacher in a school community.

- The intern's appearance, manner, and communication satisfy the expectations for a responsible adult member of the school.
- The intern is "good to work with" --punctual, reliable, responsible, friendly, energetic, and reasonable.
- The intern works with other school personnel in an open, civil, and constructive manner that respects their roles in the school.
- The intern reacts appropriately to stressful situations.
- The intern works with parents and guardians in an open, civil, and constructive manner that treats them as partners in their child's education.
- The intern participates in the life of the school, including taking advantage of professional development opportunities available to teachers.

The intern is open to alternatives and constructive feedback.

- In setting academic, social, and moral goals, the intern considers alternatives, chooses among them reasonably, and can explain why the goals chosen are important.

- In deciding what to do, the intern considers alternatives, chooses reasonably among them, and can explain why those choices are reasonable.
- The intern thinks both for now and for later, remembers what's important, and anticipates problems.
- Having planned carefully, the intern also implements those plans flexibly in light of developments.
- The intern systematically seeks information about the consequences of his/her actions, and uses that information in making decisions for the future.

The intern works productively with his/her MSU field instructor, mentor teacher, and seminar instructors in ways that support his/her learning to teach.

- The intern works with the mentor teacher and field instructor in an open, civil, and constructive manner that acknowledges their roles in the intern's education.
- The intern negotiates reasonable observer, co-teaching, and lead teaching roles with the mentor teacher, and keeps the bargains made.
- The intern engages in open and honest communication with the mentor teacher and field instructor about the situations, issues, and challenges that the intern faces.
- The intern seeks feedback from the mentor teacher and field instructor and treats that feedback as an opportunity to learn.

The intern reflects on his or her experiences and seeks opportunities for continued learning and improvement.

- The intern uses the contents of the 800-level courses to guide and inform his or her work in the classroom and school.
- The intern figures out how events and outcomes in the current situation may be relevant to other situations, and tries to recall how past situations may provide guidance in the current one.
- The intern studies how his or her choices and actions affect others, and adjusts his thinking and actions accordingly.
- The intern considers different perspectives, arguments, and alternatives, even when they are different from or conflict with his own.
- The intern uses co-planning, co-teaching, and other forms of collaborative work to learn about teaching.
- The intern uses writing such as a journal as a tool in planning and for reflecting on her teaching and her students' learning.
- The intern seeks interaction with other professionals who can help the intern carry out immediate duties and learn for the future.
- The intern makes and carries out plans for his/her own learning.
- The intern demonstrates a disposition to think about teaching not only in terms of "what works" in a lesson but also to consider questions of purposes and alternatives.

Providing Interns With Opportunities to Learn and Practice

As interns work closely with their mentor teachers, field instructors and course instructors across the year, learning what teaching particular students in particular contexts entails and beginning to develop defensible perspectives on teaching and learning, they need many different kinds of opportunities to learn and practice. As these opportunities are provided, the interns will grow to meet the MSU Program Standards. All those involved with interns need to work together to create opportunities that *prepare* interns to engage in these activities, and opportunities to *actually engage* in these activities with support. The opportunities for interns listed below correlate with the Program Standards which are used to assess and evaluate interns' progress over time.

In **teaching subject matters**, they need a chance to work on units that encompass current disciplinary standards concerning

- the nature of and major ideas in disciplines;
- processes of inquiry and the nature of evidence in the disciplines;
- the ways in which new information and experiences interact with prior knowledge to shape learning;
- the integration of the arts across the curriculum;
- strategies for helping students from varied backgrounds connect with important subject matter knowledge;
- ways to 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.

In **working with students**, interns need opportunities and support to

- co-plan and co-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 assess how the students actually did experience the lesson;
- develop and practice ways to value students' ideas, questions, and experiences and to hear their voices with respect;
- explore the challenges and opportunities that students with special needs face in the classroom, figure out how to adapt instruction to include these students, and to 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 these students, and to assess those adaptations;
- develop and practice ways to model a love of learning for students.

In **creating and managing a classroom learning community**, interns should have opportunities and support to develop, practice, and reflect on the creation of inclusive settings in which students participate in learning together. This includes:

- classroom management strategies that are consistent with and supportive of the instructional goals suggested above;

- strategies for promoting and evaluating students' self-discipline, self-evaluation, and self-regulated learning;
- strategies for involving and assessing students in task-oriented small group learning;
- strategies for engaging students in genuine discussion of intriguing questions and problems;
- strategies for encouraging students to be tolerant and supportive of each other.

In **working and learning in a school and profession**, interns need opportunities and support to

- have on-going conversations with their mentor teachers as a way to come to understand how teachers think about, plan for and reflect on their practice;
- work with their mentor teachers to co-plan units in which the mentor teacher takes the lead;
- gradually and over time assume increasing responsibility for taking the lead in co-planning;
- explore a variety of lesson, daily, unit, and long range planning formats with their mentor teachers;
- plan and carry out small studies within their classrooms in which they pose questions about teaching and learning, undertake study and action to answer that question, and learn systematically from that activity.