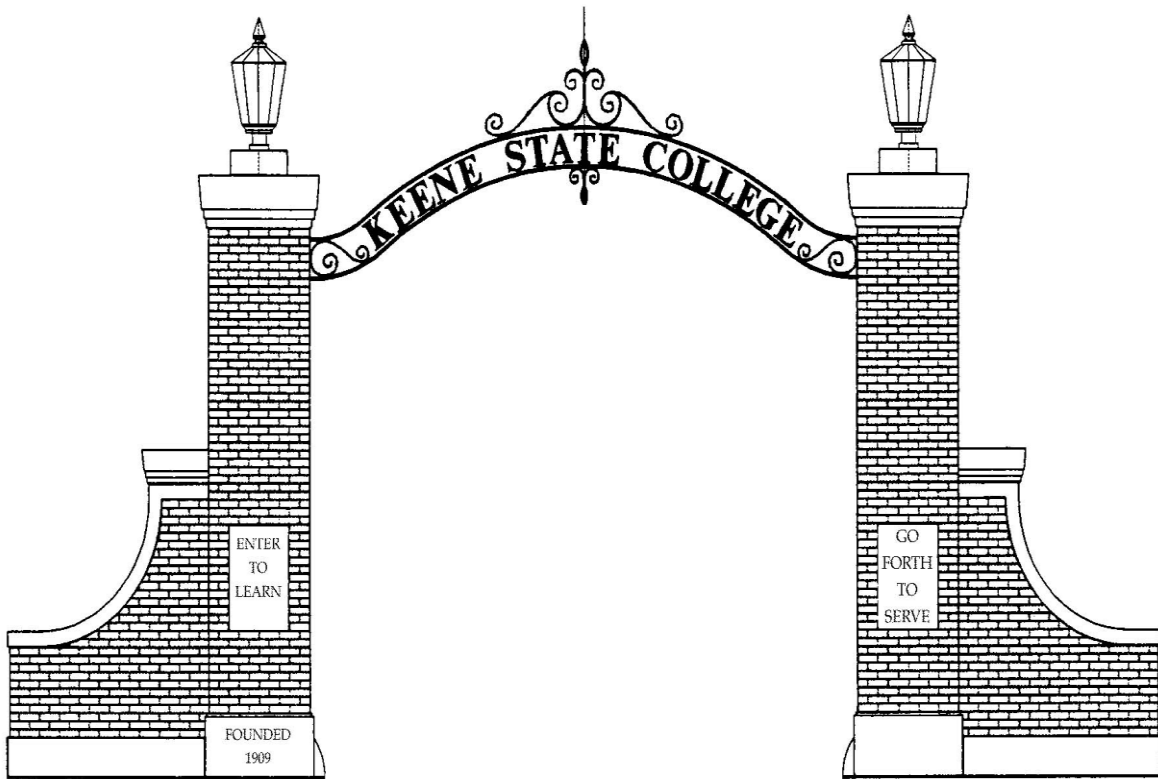


Student Teaching Handbook

Secondary Education

2011-2012



Teacher Education Office
Keene State College
Keene, New Hampshire 03435-2900
603-358-2286

Welcome to the Student Teaching Experience

A successful student teaching experience involves entering into a partnership between the student teacher and cooperating teacher that will prepare the student teacher to become a colleague in this profession. This partnership is one of the most important relationships of the student teacher's career; the cooperating teacher will become mentor, confidant, co-teacher, coach, and guide for the student teacher who will be experiencing the joys and frustrations of this career for the first time. We would like to offer some advice about how to make this experience a good one for both of you and to explain the requirements of our program.

We would also like to say that the college supervisor is an integral part of this partnership. We may only visit the school four times during the semester, but we are in regular contact with the student teacher and are happy to talk to the cooperating teacher at any time to offer help or advice. We want to do all that we can to make this crucial moment in the student teacher's professional life successful.

The Danielson Framework

All accreditation agencies are now requiring that assessment plans be part of program evaluation. To facilitate the assessment process for the Keene State College Education Program, we have adopted the guidelines explained in Charlotte Danielson's book, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. All student teachers should be familiar with these goals from their Methods class, and cooperating teachers should use these guidelines as a list of expectations to guide the assessment of the student teacher's progress.

Danielson outlines the following **objectives** that the successful student teacher should meet during the student teaching experience:

Planning and Preparation

- Plan and teach individual lessons and whole curricular units that demonstrate clear instructional goals, accurate content knowledge, and effective teaching practices
- Plan and teach a variety of classes
- Handle a full teaching load
- Design, implement, and record effective assessment tools and outcomes
- Demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of students' abilities, interests, backgrounds, and special needs

Classroom Environment

- Create an environment in which students feel respected by the teacher and their classmates and show respect to others
- Impart a sense of the importance of the content and the value of the activities and assignments required
- Communicate to students that their work is valued and have high expectations for their learning
- Handle classroom management issues effectively
- Use physical space to optimize learning
- Manage various learning groups (large group, small group, pairings, etc.), transitions, routines, and duties well
- Interact professionally with paraprofessionals and volunteers in the classroom

Instruction

- Speak and write clearly and correctly
- Facilitate discussions, ask good questions, and answer students' questions to maximize their learning

- Monitor participation carefully so that all students are engaged
- Select groupings that are appropriate for the activity
- Choose appropriate materials and link content to students' knowledge
- Teach well-structured, well-paced lessons that accomplish instructional goals
- Provide helpful and timely feedback to students
- Demonstrate an ability to adjust plans to accommodate changes in scheduling, student needs, or opportunities for further learning

Professional Responsibilities

- Reflect thoughtfully and thoroughly on teaching to determine successes and necessary revisions
- Maintain accurate records of students' work and progress
- Maintain appropriate professional contact with students' parents and guardians
- Maintain professional relationships with colleagues and participate in school events and projects
- Continue professional growth through organizations, study, research, presentations, etc.

In addition, Danielson outlines important themes that should be a part of the student teacher's professional development:

Themes

- Demonstrate a commitment to **equity** so that all students, particularly those of underserved populations (females, students of color, gays and lesbians, non-Christians) feel valued
- Demonstrate sensitivity to students of various **cultural backgrounds**, particularly those from cultures whose educational values and traditions are different from those of US schools
- Maintain **high standards** of achievement for all students
- Demonstrate an awareness of students' **developmental levels** and design assignments that are appropriate for those levels
- Learn how to accommodate students with **special needs**
- Take every opportunity to incorporate appropriate and effective **technology** into the classroom

Roles and Responsibilities

A successful student teaching experience depends on the cooperation of a number of individuals, each of whom plays a different but equally important role. To help you better understand how you fit into the mosaic of the student teaching placement, we will explain the roles and responsibilities of each of the people involved.

The TE Office

The Teacher Education Office oversees the **placement** of student teachers. Students submit their student teaching applications to this office and are interviewed by the TE Director, Merle Larracey. She then works with the secondary education faculty to find appropriate placements for our student teachers.

This office is also responsible for keeping track of the **contract** (Student Teaching Placement Agreement). The cooperating teacher needs to sign this form and also receive the principal's approval for the placement. The form should then be returned to the TE Office.

Cooperating teachers receive their **compensation** from this office after the student teaching internship is completed. They have the choice of receiving a voucher for two KSC courses (undergraduate, graduate, workshop, institute) or \$200 for the semester. If there are two cooperating teachers working with one student teacher, we ask that the teachers themselves decide how to divide up the compensation.

The cooperating teacher will need to provide a midterm evaluation of the student teacher using the Summative Evaluation Form. A copy of this evaluation should be given to the student teacher and the college supervisor. This evaluation should be discussed during the college supervisor's visit closest to midterm. (Midterm is when the student teacher will have to attend the second on-campus seminar.) The TE Office will provide you with a student teaching **schedule of important dates**.

At the end of student teaching, cooperating teachers will 1) fill out the **KSC Summative Clinical Evaluation** form, 2) fill out the **Teacher Candidate Dispositions Assessment** form, and 3) write a **formal letter of recommendation on school stationary**, all of which are filed in the TE Office. Usually, the letters of recommendation are written at the end of student teaching; however, some student teachers are looking for jobs before student teaching is over and will need this letter earlier. Since the cooperating teacher's letter is the most important one in their file, we would ask that, if it is at all possible, cooperating teachers accommodate an early letter request.

Finally, the TE office **recommends students for NH certification**. If the student teacher is offered a job before the state has issued final certification approval, this office will provide a letter to the school stating that the student has completed all the requirements for the program. Ultimately, all final decisions about certification and student teaching rest with this office.

The College Supervisor

The college supervisor has three primary roles: observer, consultant, and evaluator.

Observer

The college supervisor will visit the student teacher **four times** during the semester to observe one of the student teacher's classes. During this visit, the supervisor will need to talk to the cooperating teacher alone to discuss the student teacher's progress. The supervisor will also meet with the student teacher alone to discuss the observation and the overall success of the placement. If it can be arranged, a three-way conference may also be part of the visit. The college supervisor will do a written observation and will provide both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher with a copy of this report.

Consultant

Usually, the college supervisor for the student teacher will have been part of this student's Methods experience. The supervisor will, therefore, have already developed a good mentoring relationship with the student teacher. The college supervisor's visits, then, are not usually times of high anxiety. After the initial visit, most student teachers are pleased that they get to show the supervisor what they have done, share their students' work, and receive praise for their professional development, as well as constructive feedback from someone who has been monitoring and encouraging their growth for a long time. In other words, these visits are usually congenial times to celebrate the progress the student teacher is making toward becoming a colleague.

However, occasionally problems arise between student and cooperating teachers. In these cases, the college supervisor is there to act as a consultant and sometimes mediator so that these problems can be resolved, expectations can be clarified, and a plan for action can be developed. This is why both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher will have time to talk with the college supervisor alone.

Evaluator

The cooperating teacher will know better than anyone how successful the student teacher has been. This is why the college supervisor will consult with the cooperating teacher during every visit to make sure the student teacher is making adequate progress. However, the cooperating teacher's primary role is to serve as a mentor to the student teacher—to help that student teacher succeed and learn as much as possible during this internship.

It is the college supervisor's job to be the final evaluator—to determine if the placement is successful, if the student teacher should be removed, the provisional conditions under which a struggling student teacher may continue with a placement, and whether the student teacher passes. Obviously, all of these decisions are made in close consultation with the cooperating teacher and the student teacher so that all decisions are mutually agreeable; however, ultimately, it is the college supervisor's responsibility to be "the judge." This allows the focus of the cooperating teacher's relationship with the student teacher to be on mentoring rather than evaluating.

The Student Teacher

As secondary student teachers, you have already begun your professional work in the field during Methods where you learned and practiced the principles of professionalism that we expect to see in student teaching. Some of these are:

- That you remember **you are a guest** in this school and that the teachers and administrators there are under no obligation to allow us to use this placement site. Therefore, you must always behave in a professional and polite manner, not only so as to make your experience successful, but so that future student teachers will be welcome there.
- That you are always **present, on time, and stay for the full school day**. Under no circumstances may you be absent without a compelling reason and without informing your cooperating teacher *prior to the absence*. You must inform your college supervisor of the absence within 24 hours. You must always be at school early so that you have time to organize all your materials for the day and are ready to greet your students as they arrive. You should not leave the school until you are prepared for the next day and have your cooperating teacher's permission to do so. Be prepared to stay long after the last bell on many days for faculty meetings, co-curricular activities, providing extra help or make-up work for students, or meeting with students' parents or guardians.
- That you are always thoroughly **prepared**. It is never acceptable to "wing it" while you are student teaching. You need to discuss with your cooperating teacher exactly what kind of lesson plans you will need to produce for each lesson and always keep the teacher fully informed well in advance about what you are planning to do. If your cooperating teacher wants formal, written lesson or unit plans from you, you must provide them.
- That you continually **evaluate your own knowledge base**. If you discover an area in which you are weak, now is the time to study that area and improve your ability to communicate your understanding to students. You may not say, "I was never very good at . . ." when that subject is now an area you are expected to teach.
- That you continually **reflect on your progress**. Each lesson should cause you to consider what went well and what could have been improved. Beyond that, you must also think about why techniques worked or didn't, why certain students responded well or didn't, and what about your presence or presentation was contributing to the success or failure of a particular lesson. Make notes on your lesson plans about any changes you would make in the future.

- That you continually increase your **knowledge of your students' abilities, learning styles, and lives** so that you can adjust your lessons and methods to suit their needs and your own instructional goals. Be clear about whether the personal information that they share with you about their lives may be kept confidential or must be reported to the authorities.
- That your **attitude counts**. Your cooperating teacher, college supervisor, and most importantly, your students will be able to sense whether you are enthusiastic about what you are doing. If you care about fostering the intellectual and personal development of your students, let that show. If you love your subject matter and want your students to love it, tell them that and tell them why. If you value education, make them feel that they are spending each day doing important work with you. If you are bored or lethargic, why should they be otherwise?
- That you **know the rules** of your school. Most schools have a handbook outlining school policies. Read it and ask questions about anything you do not understand. If you have not already met with the school's administrators, set up appointments to meet the principal and guidance counselor. The first time these important people meet you should not be the first time you are facing a problem.
- That you at all times **behave in a professional manner** in terms of how you interact with administrators, colleagues, and students; how you speak and the language that you use; how you dress; how you organize your plans, files, records, and life; and how you behave in the community. A student teacher must be a model for acceptable adult behavior at all times. Even though your seniors may only be a few years younger than you are, even though you may want your students to like you, and even though you may want them to know that you relate to and understand what they are feeling, you must *never* cross the boundary between professional and personal relationships with students.
- That you **use your time well**. Past student teachers have said that the most important thing you can do to create a successful experience is to take full advantage of every opportunity for professional development that presents itself. Be on the lookout for these opportunities and be sure to document them for your portfolio. You might, for example, help with extracurricular academic school activities (yearbook, plays, music events, science or academic fairs, spelling or geography bees) and attend performances; assist a sports coach or attend games or practices; attend all meetings (faculty meetings, in-service days, parent conferences, open houses) that you are allowed to participate in; chaperone field trips or dances; or provide extra academic help to students before and after school. Each of these experiences will enhance your knowledge of your students' lives outside of your classroom. The wisdom gained and the relationships built will have a positive impact on your teaching.

The Cooperating Teacher

Cooperating teachers have said that the most satisfying part of this work is watching the student teacher succeed and knowing that they have helped create a new colleague who will make valuable contributions to the lives of students and to the profession. That is why most teachers take this on, and why many of them return to the work again and again. There will be times when you will find yourself learning from the student teacher, gathering new ideas, finding out new information, asking for an extra copy of a lesson plan for your future use. There will be times when you will watch a power struggle that has been going on in the classroom for weeks come to an end and know that the student teacher has finally gotten a handle on classroom management. There will come a time when you watch a lesson or review a lesson plan and have no suggestions, only praise to offer. There will come a time when you coach your student teacher through job interview preparation and realize how very much the student teacher has learned and how much you have contributed to that learning. And there may even come that moment when you will find yourself talking to your student teacher about students or the

material or a situation at the school and realize that you are speaking to the student teacher as a colleague and that you will miss the daily ritual of “talking shop” with someone who cares about this profession as much as you do.

This is what mentoring is all about. Your role is to model professional behavior for them, offer advice and encouragement as they grow into their new role, and then help them to achieve their goal of becoming your colleague and part of the next generation of teachers. The world’s work is seldom more significant or more meaningful than this.

To help you with this work, we would like to provide a little more information about your role and responsibilities as a cooperating teacher.

Introductions

A seemingly small but truly significant thing you can do to help your student teacher feel comfortable from the start is to introduce him or her to the appropriate staff, faculty, and administrators of your school. Make sure that the student teacher understands whom to contact in specific situations. Also, be sure to introduce your student teacher to the students on the first day and to do it in such a way that he or she is being introduced as one of their teachers, both in terms of what the student teacher is called (Ms. Smith or Mr. Jones, for example, rather than Jane or John) and in terms of authority and responsibility (“Ms. Smith will be teaching you beginning in two weeks” instead of “Ms. Smith will be helping me with your quizzes”).

Providing Feedback and Guidance

While you need to complete only two formal evaluations, you will be providing feedback and advice to the student teacher every day. This is important work because beginners need encouragement and suggestions, and your student teacher will look to you for both. While the two of you will undoubtedly develop your own routine around this, there are some important things about giving advice and mentoring to remember:

Ask questions first. Always start by asking the student teacher how the lesson or the day went. Encourage them to develop their own critical skills by finding out what they have realized on their own. You can then point out what they have missed. They may cover everything that you were going to say without your help!

Always be encouraging. Some things will have gone well, and the student teacher needs to hear this praise from you so as to continue to build confidence and be ready to hear your suggestions.

Phrase criticisms in the form of questions or suggestions. Questions will help your student teacher to think about how lessons can be revised and improved: “What else could you have said when Jane asked that question?” or “Have you thought about why Tom is behaving that way toward you?” Suggestions convey that you have confidence in the student teacher’s ability to problem-solve: “You might want to try changing the room arrangement for this project” or “Susan’s aide has a great graphic organizer she uses; you might ask her for a copy.”

Be ready to offer help if needed. If your questions and suggestions are not leading to the improvement and progress you would like to see, you might need to be a little more direct in your approach. You might offer to discuss with the student teacher how to create a better room arrangement, for example. You might ask the student teacher to watch you do an activity and then analyze it with you. You might provide the student teacher with a few model tests or assignments to analyze and then ask the student teacher to base the next assessment tool on these. The student teacher may need you to help brainstorm about a different approach to take with a student or a task. Other times the best way to help student teachers is to leave them on their own and let them handle the situation in their own way and then report back to you about how well they succeeded. The two of

you can decide together on the best ways to help the student teacher continue to grow and develop as a professional.

Helping Them to Learn

The student teacher has so much to learn that everything you do and the students do, every event from announcements to fire drills, every aspect of the school and classroom environment, in addition to every minute they spend in front of the classroom, will provide them with opportunities for learning.

Student teachers learn by observing you. You will model not only various methodologies for them, but also strategies for classroom management and handling the workload, ways to develop professional and productive relationships with students and colleagues, and techniques for establishing a positive classroom environment. It is important that you take the time to process what the student teacher is seeing and learning during observation times.

Student teachers learn through the materials you share with them. While it is important that student teachers develop their own plans, they will learn from your plans what is possible and realistic. While they will all have written unit plans and had some field experience, it is only through looking at your plans and how these change depending on the level and ability of students that they really gain a sense of what they need to do to prepare adequately for their own classrooms. We are not suggesting that you do their work for them, but we are hoping you will be generous in sharing your experience and wisdom by modeling what the job entails, including what it takes to produce a good unit. We all rely heavily on our “files,” those stacks of material we have accumulated that keep us from having to start from scratch every year and actually give us the luxury of having time to prepare new material. We encourage you to remember what it was like when no files existed for you, when every preparation was new, and when every question students asked was one you’d never answered before. Please share your files with student teachers, and then let them transform these materials into their own as practice for developing units that are completely theirs.

Student teachers will learn by doing their homework. Planning and preparation, reading, researching, writing lesson and unit plans, and creating assessment instruments are all part of a student teacher’s homework. It is up to you to determine how much of this planning and preparation you want written down and how formal you want the evidence of careful planning to be. Usually, cooperating teachers will expect to see formal lesson plans in the early weeks so that they can review goals, evaluate activities and time allotments, and be clear about what is going to take place in the class. They also want to see the student teacher’s ability to do long-term planning and so will want to see unit plans and discuss the development of long-term goals and objectives for students.

As the semester goes on and student teachers take on more and more responsibility, the lesson plans often begin to look more like those of veteran teachers, and student teachers develop their own style around preparation—creating outlines on overheads, using PowerPoint presentations, making detailed notes in a text, writing clear guidelines for an activity or assignment—and share these plans with their cooperating teachers during their regular meeting times. If it’s clear that the student teacher has carefully prepared, the cooperating teacher usually does not ask for this information to continue to be put into a formal lesson plan format.

However, some cooperating teachers ask for formal lesson plans for the entire semester because without those written plans they do not feel certain that the student teacher would prepare adequately or that they would have enough information about what is going on. In other words, this demand is often based on a question of trust. If you see evidence of a lack of preparation or your questions about planning do not receive adequate answers, it is perfectly reasonable for you continue to, or return to, requiring formal lesson plans for every lesson. The college supervisor will support you in this decision because the student teacher is a student, and one of the most important lessons he or she needs to learn is how to plan and prepare.

Letting Go

Cooperating teachers often identify “letting go” as the most difficult part of working with a student teacher—and the most important. The student teacher will never develop the necessary skills to be an effective professional if the cooperating teacher is always there to make sure everything runs smoothly. Letting the student teacher make mistakes or bad decisions and then handle the consequences of those decisions is an essential part of the learning process. Below are a few pieces of advice from cooperating teachers about how to let go and let the student teacher grow.

Don't step in to fix mistakes. Sometimes mistakes can be averted; mistakes in planning, for example, can be easily spotted by a cooperating teacher, and the student teacher can then be encouraged to change an activity or assignment. Often times, though, the mistake will happen in the spontaneous exchange in the classroom or in a last-minute alteration, and you will just watch it happen. Unless the mistake is something that will endanger students or that cannot be fixed later, you should not jump in to fix it. In your conference time, you can discuss the situation—how a student’s question could have been answered differently or how a quick answer about a deadline might lead to serious planning trouble later. The student teacher will quickly learn from these mistakes.

Don't interfere with the class. Another part of letting go, as one cooperating teacher bluntly phrased it, is “keeping your mouth shut.” Because student teachers are just learning their material, they will often not have the command of the subject matter that you do. You may well want to supplement one of their 15-second points with a 15-minute lecture on the subject or correct some error in a date or a definition. Unless the student teacher actually looks to you for help, it is best to make note of the error or what more could have been said and talk to the student teacher about it later because every time you step in to correct the student teacher, you hurt his or her credibility. Instead, you can have the student teacher return to the topic the next day.

Leave the room as much as you can. Also crucial to the student teacher’s development is time alone in the classroom. As soon as you feel comfortable with the student teacher’s ability to control the class and to perform well as a teacher, you should leave the room. This is not to say that you should “abandon” the student teacher; you will still need to be monitoring progress in some unobtrusive way. You also do not have to go far, but you should be out of sight so the student teacher discovers how the students will behave when you are not around and what it is like to teach when no other teacher is watching.

Let the student teacher develop his or her own style. Finally, your role is to guide and mentor, not necessarily to produce a carbon copy of yourself. No matter how talented you are as a teacher and no matter how successful your techniques may be, your student teacher will not be able to replicate your success by trying to imitate you. You are different people with different personalities. Student teachers need to develop their own styles based on their own personalities, values, and relationships with students. Obviously, there are some school rules or routines that all teachers have to follow. However, in those areas where the student teachers have a choice, they need to be allowed to make their own decisions, or they will never discover their strengths and will flounder when you are no longer there.

The Process of Assuming the Cooperating Teacher’s Responsibilities

As the student teacher takes on the course load and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher, we need to remember that the intern is both a “student” and a “teacher.” The student teacher is still a student, receiving college credit, paying tuition, being graded, and needing very much to learn from an experienced mentor. On the other hand, this student must leave student teaching ready to be a teacher, able to manage the full-time responsibilities of a first job. If the transition to teacher happens too quickly, the learning time is truncated and

the experience can be frustrating and unsuccessful. If it happens too slowly, the teacher preparation is truncated, and the student enters the job market feeling unprepared. It is a delicate balance.

We wish that there were a magic formula for how to make this transition successful, but there is not. A successful timeline will be different for each student teacher, not only because each student teacher is different, but also because the difficulty of the cooperating teacher's workload varies. A student teacher faced with five heterogeneously mixed middle school classes but only one preparation may be able to take on a full-load much faster than a student teacher facing three high school block periods with three entirely different preparations and levels. Also, a student teacher with a strong background in American literature and history will take on the work of an American Studies course much faster than a student whose in-depth preparation has been in British literature or geography.

So, instead of a formula, here are some basic guidelines you both can use to help determine an effective timeline for responsibilities.

Appraising the Workload

Before student teaching begins or on the first day, you will need to talk about the workload. The cooperating teacher should explain the classes, review requirements, and be honest about challenges and rewards. The student teacher should express preferences and strengths in preparation. Keeping in mind the importance of experiencing success in order to build the confidence needed to face challenges later, choose one class that you both consider to be the best starting place.

The Early Weeks

The first weeks of student teaching are crucial for establishing your relationship, your expectations, and an overall plan for the four months.

Setting Up a Regular Meeting Time

One responsibility that cooperating teachers have identified as being a challenge is finding time within the busy school day to talk with the student teacher. However difficult it may be, it is essential that the two of you find this time. When the relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers is unsuccessful, it is usually because they simply have not been communicating. Frustrations remain unexpressed, expectations are unclear, and resentments build. *It is absolutely crucial for the two of you to establish a time to talk and to remain firm in that commitment.*

Taking Over the First Class

The student teacher should take on a first class as soon as possible. For fall student teachers, this is often the first day of class. This way the student teacher learns how to begin a school year and the students see the student teacher as their "real" teacher from the start. For spring student teachers, the transition often needs to wait until the end of a unit, but certainly by the beginning of the second week, the student teacher should have primary responsibility for one class.

At the beginning, the cooperating teacher should be a presence in the room, observing and monitoring, prepared to answer questions if the student teacher needs help, and ready to give encouragement and advice after the lesson. The early weeks are a time in which the student teacher should be gaining confidence and focusing on daily planning and preparation. During the other classes, the student teacher should be observing, learning the routines, and memorizing students' names. The student teacher should use prep time to do long-term planning for that initial class and then for the next class the student teacher will take over.

Increasing the Load Gradually

As soon as the student teacher is comfortable with the routine and workload of the first class, the two of you should select a second class for the student teacher to take on. Because the student teacher will have had time to prepare for this class, the cooperating teacher should be able to review a full unit plan before the student begins teaching. The student teacher should also know the names of these students and have some idea of their ability levels and learning styles. The student teacher should take on a class at a logical break, at the end of a unit, for example.

The next class should be added as soon as possible after that and so on, until the student teacher is carrying the full load. Time spent with a full load should be carefully planned and last a **minimum of three weeks**. Asking the student teacher to do a three-week unit on a specific topic that ends at April or Thanksgiving break, for example, would be a logical way of arranging this final part of the load.

The Bell Curve

Overall, the workload should follow a bell curve. For example:

Traditional Scheduling: 5 classes

Weeks 1-3	One Class
4-5	Two Classes (same prep)
6-7	Three Classes
8-9	Four Classes (2 preps)
10-12	Five Classes (3 preps)
13	Three Classes (drop last 2 taken on)
14	Two Classes
15	Original Class

Block Scheduling: 3 classes

Weeks 1-3:	One Class
4-8:	Two Classes
9-11:	Full load
12-13:	Two Classes
14-15:	One Class

This timeline does not work for all situations or for all student teachers and could change for a variety of reasons. If the two of you have any questions about what is “reasonable,” please talk over your plan with the college supervisor during a visit. The student teacher should not feel overwhelmed, but should gain an understanding of how hard a teacher needs to work to do this job well. Student teachers also need to realize how requirements change for different class levels and how their available prep time will change as they move from having one class to a full load.

Problem-Solving Procedures

For the vast majority of student teachers, this semester is the best experience of their college years. They finally feel like real professionals, and they are finally using all the skills they have developed during their years of education. They gain confidence and develop a sense of humor about adolescent behavior, as well as a compassion for adolescent problems. They often become very attached to their students and feel sad about leaving them, but they are also anxious to meet the new students they will have in their very own classrooms the next year. For most people, student teaching is an extraordinarily satisfying experience, and they leave feeling ready to take on the challenge of their first jobs.

For most cooperating teachers, the wonderful process of mentoring student teachers and watching those new professionals take on the challenges of their first jobs is satisfying and joyful. Most of our students are very successful and seen as well-prepared, desirable colleagues and candidates for jobs. Most student teaching situations end in celebrations!

However, some do not. When something goes wrong, because the consequences for the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, and the students are so serious, the situation needs to be handled in a decisive but sensitive manner.

If the Cooperating Teacher Has Concerns

Because the cooperating teachers work with student teachers on a daily basis, they will be the first people to notice problems that the student teachers are having. These problems may occur in any of the four areas discussed in the Danielson model. For example, the student teacher may come to school unprepared or may not be willing to do the necessary studying to correct an area of weakness. In terms of creating an effective classroom environment, the student teacher may have difficulty establishing a good rapport with students. In terms of the quality of instruction, even after a good deal of experience in front of the classroom, the student teacher may still seem timid or uncomfortable or simply unhappy. The student teacher may not behave professionally in terms of clothing, language, or interaction with students.

If the cooperating teacher perceives problems at any time, the best procedure to follow is to talk directly to the student teacher first. Remember that student teachers are new at this, and they may simply not be aware of the problem. One word of advice from the cooperating teacher may change the behavior. If this does not work or if the issue is one that the cooperating teacher feels uncomfortable raising with the student teacher, then it is best to call or email the college supervisor as soon as possible. The two of you can then discuss the problem, brainstorm solutions or clarify expectations, and determine if the supervisor needs to contact the student teacher or if a three-way conference should be arranged.

If the problem is serious enough that it might lead to removing the student teacher from the school, the cooperating teacher should **document the behavior**. This means keeping a simple record of what happens and when. It is also important that the cooperating teacher document and date any conversations about the problem with the student teacher so it is clear that the student teacher was made aware that the problem existed.

If the Student Teacher Has Concerns

Occasionally, a student teacher will begin to feel that the experience is not going as well as it should. Student teachers talk to each other, and so it can become clear fairly quickly when one's experience is not matching up to what all the others seem to be going through. If a student teacher is still teaching a first class a couple of times a week while everyone else has taken on full responsibility for a second course or if a student teacher has never been left alone in the classroom after five weeks of teaching, the student teacher may begin to sense that something is missing from the experience and that, therefore, something is missing in the preparation he or she is receiving.

The student teacher, while remembering how important the relationship with the cooperating teacher is, should follow the same procedures as those recommended for the cooperating teacher: 1) talk to the cooperating teacher—ask the teacher to leave the room or to provide a timetable for taking on another class, etc.; 2) keep track of what happens and of the times when you asked for a change to be made; and 3) contact the college supervisor and talk through the issues. The college supervisor will, then, likely make this topic part of the conversation with the cooperating teacher during the next visit and will want to arrange a conference with both of you to discuss solutions.

When Solutions Fail

Almost always, a conversation that allows difficulties to be discussed openly and a plan of action to be put into place will solve whatever problem is occurring. However, when a solution to ongoing problems cannot be found, there are generally three options.

Withdrawal from Student Teaching

Withdrawing is a student teacher's decision. The student teacher has the right to withdraw at any time. Such a decision will have a major impact on the student since an entire semester's worth of credits is at stake and withdrawing usually means the student will not graduate on time. If the student teacher is contemplating this decision, he or she should contact the academic advisor, college supervisor, and Director of the TE Office before making a final decision.

When the student teacher withdraws for the right reasons, this can be a very wise choice and a good career move. While it may cause some inconvenience, the student teacher needs to do what is best and will need the help and support of the cooperating teacher during this time of transition.

Removal from Student Teaching

Occasionally, the college supervisor will find it necessary to remove a student teacher from a placement. If a student teacher consistently fails to meet the basic expectations around content knowledge, planning and preparation, and professional behavior, the student teacher will first be invited to withdraw. If the student teacher refuses that option and the behavior remains unchanged, the student teacher will be removed. The college supervisor will make this decision in consultation with the cooperating teacher, the appropriate administrators at the school, and the Director of the TE Office. It will be handled in an appropriate and respectful way, taking into account the needs of everyone involved. The cooperating teacher will be asked to write an explanation of the situation from his or her point of view to be filed with the TE office for future reference.

Placement Change

There have also been a few incidents in which the problem was in the placement site itself. The college supervisor, again working in consultation with the parties involved, may request that the student teacher be moved to a different placement.

The Importance of This Partnership

Each of us has a student teaching story to tell. Some of us were placed with wonderful mentors who guided us into the profession with a gentle but firm hand of support. Others of us were thrown into the lion's den while our cooperating teachers disappeared. The "Student Teaching Saga" is a shared experience, one some of us treasure and others of us would rather forget.

As a cooperating teacher, you will now be part of someone else's student teaching story. We want to do everything we can to make sure the story is a good one with a happy ending for all concerned. That takes cooperation and open communication among the cooperating teachers, college supervisors, and student teachers. We appreciate your commitment to the process of creating new teachers and look forward to working with you. We hope that you will feel supported by us and will be pleased with the student teacher we have sent you.

Student teachers, you will be the ones telling the story about your student teaching experience, and we hope that the story will be filled with great memories, touching moments, important insights, and lots of laughter.

We do want to say, though, that for a few student teachers who successfully complete their placement, this experience is the one that makes them know for sure that teaching is not for them, at least not right now. While it is difficult not to see this realization as some kind of failure, it is really a step toward clarity about the direction your life should take. The skills you will develop in student teaching will be valuable no matter what job you have after graduation. After all, being able to handle 50 eighth graders on a fieldtrip or keep 25 seniors on task while the warm breezes of June waft through the windows puts all of life's other challenges in perspective!

If you begin to feel that teaching is not a career you want to commit to at this time, please do not hesitate to talk to your college supervisor or cooperating teacher. You will not be the first person who has chosen a different career path after successfully completing student teaching. It is often said that teaching is not a job but a lifestyle. There is no shame in deciding that this lifestyle is not for you and choosing a better path for your own happiness and satisfaction. And remember that, if at any time in the future you should decide that you want to return to the classroom, this door will still be open to you.

Good luck to you both, student teacher and cooperating teacher, as you begin to write the story of your time together.