

Binghamton University

Graduate School of Education

Student Teaching Workbook

by
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Acknowledgements

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WELCOME TO STUDENT TEACHING

NOTES

The time has come...the day has finally arrived...you have made it to student teaching! Congratulations! For some of you this represents a dream come true; for others, the fulfillment of years of college and graduate school or a major career change; and still for others, the beginning of a fearful time. Regardless of what brought you to this point, you have worked long and hard to arrive at this stage and now, you must prepare for a new adventure...student teaching.

A truly beneficial student teaching experience begins before you ever enter the classroom. The attitude you choose can set the tone for the coming months. There may be times when you feel you are in the dark or when you simply are unaware of all that is unfolding around you. So that you do not carry a feeling of, "I'm LOST!" with you, your success depends on your being the one to ask questions, pursue answers, and become pro-active. While it would not be appropriate to state that it is always the squeaky wheel that gets the oil, it is true that when you initiate a dialogue with your cooperating teacher (CT), you convey that you have a need and can begin the exchange of information to address that need. This information is vital to your success and growth during your student teaching experience.

Depending upon your particular student teaching experience, you may have two CTs, or you may complete your student teaching in two entirely different buildings with two vastly different programs. While at first this may seem like a drawback, it truly is a blessing. The more experiences you can have during your student teaching, the better able you are to face the variety of moments you will encounter in your teaching career. Every day of every year at every school is a mosaic of experiences, conflicts, blessings, and teachable moments.

One cannot possibly learn all that is necessary to become an accomplished teacher during one semester of student teaching. Many longtime teachers will tell you that teaching is a learn-as-you-go profession. Therefore, it is only natural that when you first begin your career, during your student teaching, it is common to feel a bit overwhelmed. Learning about students of all ages, managing reluctant learners, and diffusing confrontational students are just a few of the things you will become expert at once you have more experience in a classroom. Other things surface during a school day that may challenge you as well. There may be many times during this journey when you find that you are at a loss, exhausted and ready to throw in the towel. It is at this point that you will rely on the clear channels of communication that you have built with your CT.

Because this type of clear communication is vital, it is a “best practice” for you to initiate contact with your CT. You should do this in early June, preceding a fall student teaching appointment, or in early December, preceding a spring student teaching appointment. If you do not know the name of your CT or the location of your appointment, then as soon as you do have that information, you should begin a dialogue with your CT.

During this initial dialogue, whether it is in person, via the telephone, or through e-mail, you will need to set up a meeting with your CT. The purpose of this meeting is to orient yourself to the basic information you will need to begin your student teaching. This is the first in a series of meetings you will have with your CT to share the mechanical or technical information of becoming a teacher who functions effectively within a school. Of course, you will speak to your CT in an almost constant stream of dialogue about lessons, students, and the moment-by-moment functioning of a teacher, but there are many other topics that surround being familiar with and comfortable in a classroom, a school building and a district. Separate times will need to be set aside for these conversations.

You will find your first few meetings are perhaps the most important for both you and your CT in terms of obtaining critical information to help you establish yourself with confidence. For the very first meeting, you will find it most helpful to plan your visit during the regular school day, to observe your school in action. If you are absolutely unable to physically meet with your CT, the responsibility is yours to make arrangements to connect with your CT at a convenient time. You **MUST** meet with your CT at least one time before the start of your actual student teaching.

It is so important at this initial meeting that you set the tone of open communication. To help facilitate this, you have been provided with the following checklists, covering a wide array of topics. Inform your CT that you will be bringing a checklist of critical questions (Checklist #1) with you to that meeting. Request that you review it together, filling in all of the information that you can at that time.

As a courtesy, take two copies of this list to your meeting: one for you and one for your CT. Be prepared to arrange a second meeting, shortly after your first one, to complete the second list. This will not only provide you with additional preliminary information, but it will get the two of you used to conversing professionally.

To your first meeting, if you are comfortable, take along a copy of your résumé for your CT, as he/she will appreciate knowing about you. If you are not comfortable providing your résumé, then you will need to complete the Student Teaching Biographical Information Form and provide that to your CT at that first meeting. A copy of the form follows checklist #1 in this handbook. Most CTs begin their time with a student teacher as blindly as you begin your time with your CT. Usually, you do not know them and they do not know you. If you want them to embrace you professionally, you need to provide them some way to begin to become familiar with you.

While you are providing initial information to your CT about you, you are also in the process of obtaining initial information about your new school. The first checklist can help you in your information gathering process. The preliminary information on Checklist #1 is critical to laying a foundation of knowledge for you, in terms of functioning within your new school and your CT's classroom. Remember, every question you can have answered before you set foot in your school will help equip you to begin the job of a student teacher and help you to avoid feeling at a loss. First-time teachers often struggle with command in the classroom or stage presence, as well as learning how to think on your feet. During student teaching, the last thing you need while you are struggling with big issues is one little bit of missing, but needed, information about how your school or class functions that could help you to feel stronger.

Each of the checklists is designed as a prompt for discussion and as a tool on which you may write answers from your information gathering. Use the blank spaces to fill in specific details. Plan ahead and make three or four clean copies of each list before you write on them. Even though the responses will vary from your student teaching experience to your first full-time teaching position, these lists can serve as a great starting point for you regarding critical steps and information when you are employed as a new teacher. In some school districts, they do not have a new teacher mentoring program or booklet. If that is the case where you are hired, these checklists could come in quite handy.

Please remember that having a student teacher can be a new experience and somewhat confusing for any teacher, so be certain to thank your CT for his or her time during that first meeting and throughout the coming student teaching experience.

GETTING STARTED

(This checklist # 1 should be completed as soon as you find out where and with whom you will be doing your student teaching. At the very latest, it should be completed before the first day of your student teaching.)

Where Should I Go?

Directions to school

Access to public transportation

Where to park/enter the building

Parking hangtag/sign in

Arrival and departure times

ID Badge

Keys

Closet for coats/belongings/storage

How will I obtain information?

How will you maintain contact with your CT/phone #, e mail

School year schedule/day off/in-service

What will I be teaching?

Specific discussion with CT regarding what they expect from you

Specific discussion with CT regarding what they will be doing with/for you

Specific discussion with CT regarding what are their expectations for the number of classes you will teach and when

Specific discussion with CT regarding what you expect of/from them

Grade levels/courses your CT teaches
(If you find out that your CT does not teach anything in your content area, contact your university professor immediately)

Grade levels/courses you will teach

When will you begin teaching?

STUDENT TEACHING BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

(To be given to your Coordinating Teacher)

Name _____

Current Address _____

Current Telephone # _____ Cell # _____

Undergraduate Courses in Content Area _____

Graduate Courses in Content Area _____

Is this your first student teaching experience? _____

Experience in schools observing/practicum _____

Related experience to teaching either in your content area or with this level of students

Outside jobs, hobbies that may impact student teaching _____

Contact Person for emergencies _____

EXPECTATIONS

NOTES

It is important that as you head into your student teaching experience, you do so knowing you and your CT may disagree on many things, or you may agree on everything, or you may land somewhere in the middle of these two extreme views. Regardless, problems can occur during student teaching, as with any other situation in life, where roles and expectations are not clearly defined or met.

Points of conflict during student teaching that revolve around the student teacher usually surface surrounding these items: student teachers not being professional, not being committed, having unrealistic expectations, not being academically prepared, not being professionally prepared, and the most common problem: student teachers not being willing to work hard enough. Thus, your work ethic may surface as an issue during student teaching. Granted, you may be taking classes simultaneously, or you may be working at a part-time or full-time job. Many student teachers today are responsible for running a family while taking on student teaching. Sadly, there is little time or compassion for these facts of life. The student teaching experience is to the teaching profession like a doctor's residency program: the hours are relentless, but the rewards and growth are great.

As a student teacher, you need to be prepared to do more work than you ever thought possible. And you should remain professional at all times while learning your way through an unfamiliar situation. It will be important for you to arrive on time, or early, to come prepared and not whine about what is expected of you and overall, to treat your student teaching experience seriously. To do this, first you need to fulfill the expectations of your actual classroom time. Teaching two or more class periods daily, full classes, not just labs, should be the minimum in your appointment. At first, this may overwhelm you, but with practice and experience, you will eventually feel that you are leading your student teaching experience, rather than feeling that your student teaching experience is leading you. While it will be important for you to have lesson plans, it is also important for you to have a back-up plan, and to know when to forego a lesson for a priority issue that may surface in your classroom. When these changes occur, again you may feel lost, but you will, with practice, learn to think quickly and eventually surface as a leader in your classroom.

Problems during student teaching do not just arise around lesson plans; they may also, in your opinion, surface surrounding your CT. You need to know that not all classroom teachers welcome student teachers. In some cases, the teacher is pressured to take on a student teacher. In other cases, the classroom teacher is simply ambivalent.

Some teachers look forward to having a student teacher. You may be walking into any possible set of circumstances. Unfortunately, you remain the student and they remain the teacher. You may feel, about an issue that surfaces, that you are right, and in fact, you may be—but you will not change your CT. It is her or his classroom, curriculum and school. You are there to learn and to be given the opportunity to experience the roles of a teacher. Feeling at odds with your CT can present frustrations, so it is important that you communicate frequently with your professor to help avoid the feelings of isolation. In very rare circumstances, a new placement may be warranted.

Even though you are student teaching, it is important that you perform, in every way possible, like a classroom teacher. You should represent yourself and the profession in a respectable manner. Dress professionally, making certain that you are not violating the dress code of the school in which you are doing your student teaching.

Maintain propriety and learn the value of keeping your ears open and thinking before you speak. Remain professional and do not participate in gossip of any kind. Become an observer and a listener, then a participant, and finally a classroom leader.

During your student teaching appointment there may be many areas in which you will find yourself challenged, as well as many areas where you will have an opportunity to shine. Be mindful that while you are in a teaching situation, you are also learning. Questions may arise about appropriate grading philosophies or how to weight assignments. You may learn how your CT handles these issues, but you will not always get the answers you want. And, during all of this, you will be evaluated by your CT, possibly by the department chair or lead teacher at your school, and by your contact person at the university. They may be looking for your proficiency in classroom management skills, your critical thinking skills, and your ability to think on your feet, your knowledge of all facets of your content area, as well as your knowledge of a variety of assessment strategies. In addition, your lesson planning, your use of technology, your familiarity with state standards, your ability to collaborate with other professionals and your confidence and willingness to reflect upon your growth are also areas that may be evaluated.

CRITICAL INFORMATION

(This Checklist #2 should be completed before your student teaching appointment begins, or at the very latest, by the end of the first week of student teaching.)

Expectations/year-long curriculum/absolute requirements

Cooperating teacher and student teacher exchange printed materials, including policy guidelines, handbooks (this guide!), syllabi, curriculum documents, school schedule

Exit exams/regents or final/mid-term or end goal

Specific content you will teach: creative/analytical/technology

Bell Schedules

Room opening/closing procedures

School phone # if you cannot reach CT

Sick day call-in policy/where, when, how or with whom to leave plans

Liaison if CT is absent

Homeroom responsibilities

Grade level meeting schedule

Departmental meeting expectations and inservice professional development expectations

Introduction to the staff and principal

Community and demographics of the students, context in which you will be teaching

PREPARATION

NOTES

Now you need to focus on time to prepare. For many teachers, preparation is part of the joy of the career. They love planning a lesson, varying the activities, assembling information from a variety of sources; they pride themselves on staying current, interesting, and informative for their students. Other teachers will open the textbook or anthology and begin on page one, proceeding through the text as the year unfolds.

Regardless of your approach or the approach of your CT, one thing is certain. You must key into the level of the students you are teaching. You will need to spend time in conversation with your CT developing a feel for what is appropriate for each grade level. That is a vital part of your planning. Learning the appropriate quality and depth of work for any given grade level is often a challenge. It is sometimes best to seek out teachers in a grade level above and below your assignment to look at examples of their top, middle, and bottom student work. This may help you place the work of the students in your level.

In addition to establishing the norm for your level, you must, after determining your year-end goals, break down all that you will teach into manageable lessons. While so much of this is something you learn on the job, a great measure of it must be inside you, or you must be able to find it in a resource. This means that if you do not know the content of a grade level, or if you do not know how to prepare a lesson plan, or if you do not know how to do whatever is expected of you, *it is your responsibility to find out how to do these things. Your university preparation is not intended to address every conceivable aspect of teaching.*

With these lessons comes grading. Will you follow state rubrics to assess? Are there school or departmental rubrics that you must follow? Will you be formulating your own rubrics, and if so, how will you know what are valuable areas to assess? These are all questions that you may find less daunting over time. Your specific lesson plans here will help you in determining the types of things to be assessed. Your CT and other faculty will also have much input on this subject. It is wise to listen to many different types of teachers to help you formulate your approach to grading/assessments.

During your student teaching experience, you may face sharing a grade book with your CT or you may have your own grade book. The two of you will have to sort this out. Regardless, this is an important document, and you will want to keep it up to date to make tallying

easy. If you are able to use a computer program, you will find it helpful for keeping up to date.

Do not be surprised if your CT is helpful but suggests you find out the “how to” on your own. Your CT knows the value of owning your way into your teaching style. (To assist you in one part of this challenge, developing a lesson plan, a basic format sheet is provided at the end of this text.)

As your student teaching experience unfolds, you will need to balance catching up on the things for which you were not prepared with the immediate demands of the daily routine. These demands often absorb every second of the day. *Therefore, it is unreasonable for you to expect to accomplish all of your preparations during a single prep period.* Plan accordingly, so that during your student teaching, you have time available on nights and weekends to accommodate your planning. You will need time to study discipline techniques, classroom management skills, and structuring lesson plans to connect with state standards, as well as time devoted to learning assessment techniques that are valuable, effective and not too time consuming.

Remember that you must remain flexible, as each day’s schedule may change. Do plan on using your prep period, whenever possible, to conduct the business of the day that cannot be done while actively teaching: sending and replying to important e mails, returning parent phone calls, attending parent conferences or other meetings, and following up on a student in the main office, guidance office, or nurse’s office.

While you are juggling planning, it is also very important that you remain flexible and upbeat as you learn your way through administration, student crises, and the various issues you will confront daily. From focusing on the learning standards of your state, including expectations of exit exams to something as basic as how to use a grade book, your student teaching experience will be broad and can seem overwhelming. Therefore, regardless of how you incorporate all of the facets of a teacher’s day into your schedule, you must also strive to accomplish the job in less than 24 hours. Sleeping and eating are also vital to your success.

Try to remember that you are a student in your own world. The student teaching experience is likely to teach you as much about yourself and your interpersonal abilities as it does about your abilities in the classroom. Consider keeping a journal of your experiences (indeed, some programs may require this) to help you reflect on what you’re learning. Develop a philosophy for survival that will help you

through all the situations you encounter, both during student teaching and in your future as a classroom teacher.

ROUTINE

(This checklist #3 should be completed no later than the second week of your student teaching appointment.)

Faculty meeting schedule

Your department meeting schedule

Activity/teacher consultation periods

Bathrooms

Office space/desk, files for you

Communication via classroom phones/intercom/secure extensions

Lunch routine/place to eat

Cafeteria food prices

Place to buy lunch/place to store lunch you brought

E-mail accounts

Copy room use/location/limits

Mail boxes/getting mail

What important rules do I need to know?

Copy of student handbook/faculty handbook

Plan book/shared, personal

Copy of Checklist for newly hired teachers in the district

Computer use/login/lab for classroom

Class website/district guidelines for development

Closed/open campus/enforced

What do I need to know about working with parents?

Parent/guardian introduction letter/memo-to include the extent of your role, course content, brief background

Parent/ guardian contact procedures/witness

Emancipation

Attendance Open House/Curriculum Night

COMMUNICATION

NOTES

Because your student teaching appointment encompasses so much of the school day, not just classroom time, it becomes an experience that develops every part of your teacher preparation. Many people view their student teaching time as if it were one long job interview, assessing themselves daily as if they are first-year teachers.

There are pros and cons to this view. It can be positive because it may drive you to push yourself to the utmost achievement in your commitment to student teaching—but it can be negative because it provides undue pressure. Rather than feeling you are being watched as if your days were an interview, you may instead consider using the time for self-evaluation.

Evaluate your actions daily to determine (based on your behavior, teaching and professionalism) your current district would hire you. If you respond here with a “No!” do not be alarmed. Your professor, your CT, and you should be very aware that this is *student* teaching, and you are learning as much as you are teaching. Mistakes will be made; that is just the nature of the learning.

Through this process of making mistakes and correcting them, you should be building a dialogue with your CT where you are comfortable. Be honest with yourself and your CT and ask questions about your challenges, discuss your areas of growth, and explore areas where you do well.

Communication is key. The relationship between you and your CT is similar to a marriage. Whether either of you likes to think of it in this way, for the period of time that you student teach, you are in this type of relationship. Considering this is like a marriage, one would think the responsibilities of open communication could be shared equally; however, in truth, most of the responsibility for open communication between you and your CT falls on your shoulders. Your CT must monitor and interpret for you all that you do and do not do, along with planning all of the rest of his or her classes, and complete the remainder of the job. The CT may not always initiate a conversation, even when it is needed, but you can! You may also encounter situations where your CT views your relationship as if you are the child and he or she is the parent. This may be comfortable for you at the beginning of your student teaching appointment, but as you progress, you may need to address this role with your CT.

Make certain that when you and your CT communicate, that you are clear. Establish boundaries: for example, who will be teaching

what/doing what? Together you and your CT must discuss how much authority you will have with students, with administrators and with other adults. How, and how often will you and your CT talk? Will your CT officially observe you, and if so how? What will be the criteria?

These are some things for you to think about as you build the relationship with your CT and establish yourself as a direct communicator.

RESPONSIBILITIES

(This checklist #4 should be completed no later than the third week of your student teaching appointment.)

Who will be in your classes?

Class lists

Writing/reading lab rotations/expectations

Duties (hall monitor, cafeteria monitor, etc.)

Floating teacher/classroom

Class sizes

Classroom rules/who decides/teacher's rules vs. your rules

Shared classrooms

Time out of classroom/music lessons/athletic events/early dismissal

Number of classes consecutively taught/prep periods

What rules should I be aware of?

5 day/6 day/A, B schedule/block scheduling

Building phone system/inter-office/outside calls

Fire drills/emergency escape plans

IEPs/what are they/who has them/confidentiality

Alternate testing site/modifications/dispensation

List from nurse of medical exceptions

Discipline policy/referrals, procedures

Attendance issues/ write-ups

Dress Code/students/YOU (specifically what is acceptable)

Hall/locker/bathroom/computer room/library passes/procedures

Web access rules

Video equipment

Supplies/where to find/what is available/what to buy

What are my classroom tools?

Seating chart/room arrangements

Grading/CT's method/school method/your method

Formulas/weighted averages/EXCEL

5 week/10 week/semester courses/one-both semesters/grades

Grade book/take with you during fire drills/record-keeping/symbols used for attendance

CT's book for record keeping/your book

Food/drink in classroom/no lunch

Book sign out/covers

CONFIDENCE

NOTES

For some personalities, one of the most difficult parts of the student teaching experience is the struggle of who is in control. Because so much of your time as a student teacher is consumed with your CT providing answers to the vast number of questions you have, you may frequently feel that he or she is always telling you what to do—and this may undermine your confidence. You may feel as if there is rarely a time when you are fully in control. Eventually this feeling of always following and not leading will fade, as you learn and experience more.

Asking many questions and getting answers early on in your student teaching experience is key to your moving quickly toward a feeling of leading and being in control. You may find that you need to approach your CT regularly with questions about you and your performance, questions that may yield responses to which you are sensitive. This is a learning process and a growing process that ultimately will make you a better teacher, a better person, and one who can easily control a classroom.

To grow, you must ask your CT for help with your weak areas. Explore your fears in terms of your performance in the classroom and in the school at large. Discuss your areas of concern in terms of your proficiency with your content area. And discuss your strengths and consider what aspects of teaching give you the most pleasure. Think about what you do well as you ponder what you can do better. Always remember that a great classroom teacher is not born overnight, but evolves and develops over time.

While this is not a checklist, it is important that you spend some time now thinking about your greatest concerns and fears. List them on the next page, and spend time in reflection before you engage your CT in a dialogue about them. Remember to keep an open mind and learn to filter your CT's responses, as he or she is offering only an opinion to help you grow.

I feel confident about . . .

1.

2.

3.

I am concerned about . . .

1.

2.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

(This checklist # 5 should be completed no later than the end of your fourth week of your student teaching appointment.)

What goes on outside the classroom that I need to know about?

Keying into district, departmental, state standards and goals

Outside classroom assistance/co-teaching/speaker's bureau

Push-in teachers

Resource room students/teachers/use

Library/personal use/classroom use

Reading lab

Writing Lab

Regent's diploma/IEP diploma/special needs students

CSE meetings

ESL

What other things do I need to know inside the classroom?

Book share

Access to computers for whole class and policies about computer use

Warm-up/"getting to know you" activity/bell ringer

What do I need to know about grading?

Grading rubrics

Curriculum map/spiral

Will I see others teach? Who will watch me?

How/when will the observer from the university attend?

How/when will I observe others in this department or other departments?

How much will I be included in departmental issues/meetings?

What are you thinking about you?

How are you learning classroom management skills?

How are you defining your grading and assessment policies?

Where are you writing and reflecting upon your experiences and impressions?

What are you learning from your fieldwork?

Are you receiving ample opportunity to gain experience?

Is there something you want to learn but haven't yet had the opportunity to do so?

LESSON PLANS

NOTES

While there are many templates, in both the print and electronic world, showing how to write a lesson plan, one is also provided here that is quite basic and great for beginners. A key aspect of any lesson plan is that second word, *plan*. The words you speak and the events that unfold in a classroom need to be planned so that you end up where you need to be...to key into your overall goals.

To end at the right point, a teacher needs to be clear on the small pieces that make up the big picture. At the beginning of every planning session, the formal question you should ask yourself is, “What learning outcomes do I intend at the end of this 40-or-so-minute lesson?”

Really, what you as a classroom teacher are exploring is, “What will my students be able to do, or to know, when I am finished with this one lesson?” A clear sense of direction here provides you with how this lesson will connect with your student’s needs, your overall unit plan, and your curriculum goals for the year. Of course, your lessons must also key into state standards. Will your focus be on listening skills, reading for understanding, written expression, or what?

Traditionally, teachers should submit lesson plans for all observations. In many districts, teachers are also required to provide a department chairperson or administrator a completed lesson plan book, sometimes detailing lesson plans for two to three upcoming weeks. Some districts require that lesson plan books remain on the premises at all times, while other districts never focus on plans and plan books at all. You will need to familiarize yourself with what is expected of you in the district in which you student teach.

In your teaching career, you may encounter veteran teachers who still plan out everything and veteran teachers who plan nothing. Likewise, you may encounter the same with newer teachers. Some school districts have very specific formats, including pre-printed forms, which meet their standards for lesson plans. Other districts have no expectations and impose no forms.

The example provided here is a suggestion or a skeleton for you to use as a starting point. Whether you use this format as an actual lesson plan or just as a planning tool for yourself, you will find that it serves as an excellent organizational tool.

Sometimes classroom teachers rely on a lesson plan to help justify or explain what goes on in the classroom. Often, a lesson plan can detail

the key points to a program that you have taught during a given time period. Regardless of the reasons for committing your plans to paper, a detailed lesson plan will help you to see that your teaching is on track with your goals.

A simple lesson plan, at the very least, divides your approach into the following areas:

- Objectives (what your students will learn, be able to do)
- Activities (how the students will go about the learning)
- Assessments (how you will assess what they have learned: short-term, long-term)
- Target (area you plan to focus on in your professional development as a teacher)

It can be that simple, or you can subdivide these areas even more. It is best to find out what is expected of you individually during your student teaching experience. Will you be expected to produce completed lesson plans for each lesson you teach? How far in advance will this be required? Who will help you connect the curriculum goals of the course to your grade level, or will you be on your own for this? Will your CT provide guidance to help you match the skills of your lesson to the level of your students? Can what you have planned for one lesson be accomplished in one class period?

In looking at each section of the lesson plan, organizing your thoughts is key:

Objectives, what the students will learn or be able to do, can be something as complex as *students will learn how to write a DBQ essay (document-based) following the state standards, to students will be able to express sound understanding of the information in chapter 6 and find quotations that reveal changes in the topic.* An objective could be *students will learn the skill of _____*, **or** something like *students will demonstrate proficiency in identifying terms in the chapter.* Regardless of the specifics of your objective, it must be clear and manageable in the time you have.

When you write this portion of your lesson plan, use this type of language: “Students will be able to...” **or** “Students will learn to...” As you become more confident and develop as a teacher, you will find

your own way or perhaps use your school's way to write an objective, but this is a clear and simple way to begin.

Activities, how the students will go about the learning, may include *students will work in small groups investigating cause and effect, to students will take notes using the Cornell note taking method and then compare the contents of their notes with a partner.* Activities could also include *students will participate in a whole class discussion, to students will read and answer questions about the text.* It is quite important to vary your activities throughout the class period and the week. Pay close attention in your methods classes and read many teaching manuals to develop a full array of activities that you can employ as a classroom teacher. In general, aim for three different kinds of activities or three differently paced activities in a class period.

When you write this portion of your lesson plan use this type of language: “Students will participate in...” **or** “Each student will read and write...” **or** “Students will listen and....” Language here that keys into your state standards helps convey that you are aware and are connecting to something larger than just what you want to do in the confines of your classroom. Sometimes your CT will ask you to make a specific link to the appropriate NYS disciplinary standard in your lesson plans.

Assessments, how you will assess what they have learned, come in all shapes and sizes. They can include *quizzes, tests, essays, oral presentations, homework checks and conversations, or immediate responses, commitment cards, surveys and brain games.* There are conventional assessments and unconventional ones, but one thing is certain: assessments vary widely based on teacher personality. You may want to take a course or do some professional reading on the variety of assessment strategies that are effective for today's diverse student population. The best teachers will tell you that variety is key to effective assessments, as is having some assessment strategies connected to long-term goals and some strategies connected to short-term goals.

When you write this portion of your lesson, plan use this type of language: “Students will be tested at the end of the class period with...” **or** “A question and answer period for ten minutes will follow the discussion in which the teacher will observe and record responses...” **or** “Two days later students will be assigned an essay which must include information from this activity. The rubric for the essay addresses three things from today that must be included.” In writing your lesson plan, you will most likely find the greatest variety in language here.

Target represents a skill, which you as a teacher are trying to develop and improve. When you are a student teacher or a new teacher, you may find it difficult to isolate only one skill or technique; you will find it most beneficial if, in each lesson that you teach, you truly focus on only one small portion of your teaching technique. Perhaps you want to *make sure you allow students enough time to respond to your questions*, **or** perhaps you want to *make sure that they do most of the talking*. Frequently, targets can include *speaking clearly and loudly*, **or** *managing movement of students within the classroom during a lesson*. Keep in mind that for your entire teaching career, you will always be able to write a target. As teaching professionals we are always improving our techniques.

When you write this portion of your lesson plan use this type of language: “I want to remain aware of my _____ during this lesson” **or** “I want to focus my energy on my ability to _____ during this lesson.” Some of the most professional teachers are the ones most willing to reflect upon their areas of personal development within the classroom.

Following is a blank form for the lesson plan. Before you write on this sample, make many copies.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN FORMAT

Lesson Title/Topic:

Date:

Grade/Course:

Teacher:

Objectives: (What will students be able to do, to know, to have learned?)

NYS Standards: (Which two standards apply?)

Activities: (How will students go about the learning?)

Assessments: (How will student learning be evaluated?)

Target: (My individual focus throughout this lesson is _____?)

ESTABLISHING POLICY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

NOTES

One of the most valuable things you can do as a teacher is to establish rules, guidelines, or policies for your classroom. Some people find this practice limiting, while others realize that it can be a time-saver that helps to create a safe learning environment.

Your administrators will establish and enforce certain rules year after year. However, attendance, class arrival time, and the expected behavior within the class are all things that are ongoing and that fall within your domain: you need to establish guidelines within your classroom that address these concerns. In some schools, a student or teacher handbook spells out for you the standard for these concerns. Many schools offer very clear guidelines and parameters that apply to the attendance policy, for instance, yet there may be teachers who do not follow these parameters.

It is wise to always follow an established rule: first, because it is your job to do so, but secondly, because it provides consistency. Your classroom will run much more smoothly with this type of consistency. You will gain a reputation with your administrators and your peers of being one who is consistent and enforces school rules. Once students learn that you are consistent with the enforcement of one rule, they will understand that you will enforce with consistency other policies. Generally, public schools are not places where you make your own rules about too many things, however, within your own classroom, there are areas where you may establish policy.

Appropriate use of the physical space in your classroom, expected student behavior before, during and after class (like speaking in turn), treatment of others, and respecting you as the teacher are all areas where a previously established policy is helpful. There will always be times when you want to make an exception, but overall it helps to have a policy in place to solve many problems. These rules, or policies, are things that you must spell out clearly at the beginning of a term, as students will not necessarily know them, nor can they read your mind. No, they do not automatically know that it is a poor choice to get up from their seat to go open a window right in the middle of a group presentation by their peers. You may say, "Gee, is that such a bad thing?" Well, no, one student's leaving a seat one time to open a window without permission is not a violation of the constitution, but it also could be the beginning of the end of order in your classroom. The bottom line is that you simply must establish some behavioral guidelines and, if you are reasonable in the parameters you establish, most students will comply.

You will find that some students consistently take advantage of you or a situation. To prevent this abuse of the system—and you—clear guidelines, established at the beginning of a year, are most helpful. Remember, it is great to be **friendly** with your students, but you are not their **friend**. You are there to teach a content area to students, not to be a friend, nor to be the parent. You are not there to save them, but to teach them. Within the realm of teaching, most certainly there is compassion and sensitivity, and you will teach many other things besides just your content area, simply by the nature of good teaching. But you are the captain of the classroom ship, and it is your job to set the tone for the journey, especially at the beginning of the year. As you move further into a school year, your students will have adopted the acceptable behaviors in your classroom: they will move into a leadership role within the room, and then you may step back. This is how they mature, but this is also something you must teach them.

Many beginning teachers fail to establish classroom policy because they are simply afraid of their students or they want their students to like them instead of being perceived as a disciplinarian. There really is no reason to fear 99% of the students you will encounter. If you simply state how you would like things to run and then consistently support that when it is challenged the first few times, you will have established a climate that is smooth-running, safe for students, and conducive to learning. Students need to feel safe to let down their guard and grow and learn, and it is up to you to help them feel safe in the classroom. Your consistent enforcement of your classroom rules and guidelines will help establish this safe climate.

Some beginning teachers believe it important that their students **like** them. This is an area of huge debate, akin to the “which came first...the chicken...” well, you get the picture. While many will dispute this, students truly want to know their limits. They want to know exactly what is expected, especially regarding behavior. Most students really do want to get along well with you, despite their questionable enthusiasm for your content area. It is rare that a child arrives every day at school thinking, “Boy, I hate every one of my teachers and I want to hate them even more today than yesterday!” If you work well with your students all year long, establishing clear guidelines and boundaries, and if you attempt to be honest and sincere with them, most often they will reciprocate not only with appropriate behavior, but in the end, it is probable that they **will** like you.

Much of navigating your way through this establishing of policy is like playing Monopoly either at your house or at someone else’s house. House rules apply, and your students will figure these out, especially if

you clearly identify a guideline early in the year. It seldom, if ever, occurs that a child will refuse to play the game because they fail to understand the need for rules; they have played Monopoly too. They may not like your specific rules, but they do understand the need for them. How you present your guidelines will make all the difference.

Do you want to have rules for attendance, lateness, quiet times such as during announcements, missed due dates for assignments, standards such as typed essays or signed homework? First you will need to check with the teacher handbook or student handbook at your school to see if there are already rules in place. This is one of those times when you may not have to reinvent the wheel; you may simply need to enforce it. After checking those two handbooks, the next logical place is to check with a department chair, lead teacher or mentor. Inquire as to what rules are in place from the administration, or within the department regarding your concern. If you find that there is no rule to address your concern, then test your rule through the experienced view of a senior teacher. Be willing to look at the pros and cons, understanding that your style may not match the style of other teachers, but that that does not always mean your guideline or rule is unreasonable.

There are teachers, both beginners and seniors, who operate effectively without any rules or guidelines in their classrooms. They have managed, through their own dynamic personality and charisma, to affect the behaviors of their students without having specific, unilateral rules. This can work effectively, but it is **rare**, and usually takes years to develop. There are also teachers, both beginners and seniors, who have no rules because they simply are not effective teachers. Fortunately, they are in the minority. Watch and listen to the many different types of teachers you will encounter in your first few weeks of student teaching. Observe the many ways in which they maintain control within their classrooms yet create a climate that allows students to grow and blossom.

Students of all ages, in every content area, can benefit from the structure provided in a classroom where clearly defined parameters are given, where expectations for behavior are known, and where the captain truly is steering the ship through smooth waters. Always remember that learning is the goal in your classroom and that anything you can do to create a climate to encourage that is vital.

IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

NOTES

You now embark on the journey of a teaching professional, one who never really finishes learning how to teach. Therefore, it seems inappropriate to close this workbook with a conclusion: rather, it would seem a reflection is more in order.

Thus far, has your student teaching experience been anything like what you thought it would be? Were you prepared? Are you eager now to have your own classroom? Of course each of these questions may elicit a variety of responses; however, most student teachers do feel that they began student teaching unprepared in certain areas. That is simply a part of the experience. It is virtually impossible for undergraduate or graduate classes or great methods and content textbooks to prepare you adequately to become a teacher. Student teaching is a beginning—and now you have the opportunity to continue to learn and grow as a teaching professional.

Take what you have learned from this workbook and from your student teaching experience, and being honest with yourself, identify your strengths and weaknesses. Investigate courses, books, or other teachers whom you feel could help fill in some of the areas in which you lack expertise. As a rule, teachers are quite willing to mentor and share. Most teachers had someone somewhere provide guidance when it was needed, and they are willing to return the favor. Spend some time each summer formulating a list of all the new strategies you want to try. It is often through trial and error that you find you grow the most professionally.

Throughout your years of teaching, always keep an eye on the past with a window open to the future; seek out the advice of veteran teachers; yet remain open to new concepts and approaches. This can be the most exciting of all professions, as each day in each school your content area, your students, and you are all changing. This perpetual evolution provides great freedom for you to truly become an *effective teacher*.