

CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN LUIS OBISPO

CANDIDATE HANDBOOK



CAL POLY

SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION

Teacher Preparation Clinical Practice

Updated August 2023



NOTICE

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I. CLINICAL PRACTICE NARRATIVE & THEORETICAL APPROACH

Through site-based work and clinical experiences, programs offered by the unit provide candidates with opportunities to both experience issues of diversity that affect school climate and to effectively implement research-based strategies for improving teaching and student learning. This feature has been bolstered in our credential programs and is in part a response to a report by NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), a national accrediting body for pre-service teacher education, that called for clinically based teacher preparation programs.

Credential programs at the SOE shifted their coursework to even more strongly base teacher candidates' learning in school classrooms and are deeply grounded in learn by doing; future educators work alongside experts in the field to hone their craft through a gradual release of responsibility. This learn by doing approach embeds Cal Poly's innovative polytechnic approach to higher education with best practices and theories in education by building a community of practice that emphasizes continuous improvement and a culture of shared learning.

In order to build a successful learn by doing clinical practice program, great care and thought goes into articulating all facets of the clinical experience, including roles, coaching, language, and the supports that are leveraged at each phase of field experience. By intentionally articulating shared principles and values throughout clinical practice, the SOE builds meaningful connections between the Cal Poly campus and the field.



In the SOE, clinical practice roles and responsibilities are expressed through the triad, a designed collaboration between the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, or mentor administrator (district-employed supervisor), and university supervisor (program supervisor). Each member of the triad participates in learning experiences



that help to create a community of practice based on shared language, best practices, and theories. This ensures that the strategies, coaching, and evaluation that teacher candidates experience in the field are consistent with the theories and language promoted in SOE coursework.

The Cal Poly School of Education further advances a shared vision of effective teaching and learning through the [SOE Observation Tool](#), which articulates 17 prioritized skills at the center of effective teaching practice. While future educators study the theories and best practices behind these prioritized skills in their coursework, the SOE offers workshops and professional development resources for cooperating teachers, school-site administrators, and our surrounding community to norm our collective understanding of the SOE observation tool, and to encourage common language. By developing shared expectations and norms grounded in the observation tool, we tighten the relationship between the School of Education and fieldwork sites, creating a more coherent experience for our teacher candidates. Fostering this shared vision of teaching and learning also serves to demystify effective teaching practice and reveals a transparent development path for teacher candidates as they uncover and honor their own craft as future master teachers.

The final linchpin in Cal Poly's approach to clinical practice is building a community and experience that encourages continuous growth and improvement, along with the risk-taking that is inherent in that process. The learn by doing approach requires future educators, and the experts with whom they work alongside, to be open to new ideas, implement innovative strategies, assess, and reflect on resulting successes and inevitable failures. Developing these practices requires vulnerability, willingness to change, and the ability to own missteps. By encouraging these habits, however, the SOE ensures that future educators will be prepared for advanced studies in education, action research, and a commitment to continuous growth that will improve their practice and the outcomes of their students throughout their careers.



II. THE TRIAD & COTEACHING

Clinical practice is a team effort that encompasses the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor in a 'triad' of shared responsibility and collaboration. Additionally, university faculty, the school-site administrator, the program coordinators, and the SOE clinical practice coordinator support the healthy collaboration and effectiveness of the triad. Each member of this team has a vital role to create the best possible clinical practice experience for future teachers. The role and responsibilities of each team member are described below.

TEACHER CANDIDATE RESPONSIBILITIES: Teacher candidates should demonstrate professional dispositions while representing Cal Poly in the field. The success of a teacher candidate often depends on attitude and professionalism more than any other factors.

- Be familiar with and actively involved with the clinical practice observation protocol, observation tool, and learning modules, described throughout this handbook.
- Develop lesson plans and units of instruction appropriate to the curriculum, the cooperating teacher, and the school.
- Be professional and open when receiving constructive feedback offered by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor.
- Prompt attendance is essential. Notify the school-site administrative assistant, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor in case of absence due to illness. Absences for reasons other than illness must be approved by your university supervisor and cooperating teacher and may require make-up time. Observe district holidays during clinical practicum, NOT Cal Poly holidays, unless otherwise notified. Do not observe Cal Poly holidays if your school district is in session. In addition, if the school district has a holiday but Cal Poly is in session on a day that you have a course at Cal Poly, you are expected to attend your class at Cal Poly.
- Dress professionally, appropriate to the school site.
- Be conscientious and sensitive in dealings with students, school staff, cooperating teachers, caregivers, and Cal Poly faculty and staff. Treat information learned about students and caregivers in the course of this assignment as confidential knowledge, except when it is the legal responsibility of the teacher candidate to do otherwise.
- Follow federal FERPA guidelines for protecting the identities of students, including likenesses in photographs or videos (such as with Edthena or for edTPA submission). Teacher candidates should inquire and verify if the school site has video/image release forms on file for every student in the classroom and should use a Cal Poly approved media release to obtain permissions if needed. Videos and photos of minor students should only be used for educational purposes and should never be posted to a personal social media page.
- Be aware of your accounts on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media website. Your posts can potentially have you removed from your clinical placement, the program, and possibly affect your teaching career.



- Do not engage (e.g., “follow” even if a student chooses to follow you) or interact with students through social media.
- Maintain professional relationships with all students at your school site. All communication with students must be through official channels such as district approved applications or emails. Do not socialize or meet with students outside of the school site or school events.
- Avoid being alone with a student unless it is for school related matters. If a student is attempting to meet with you outside of the school site or school events, alert your cooperating teacher and university supervisor.
- Be responsible for carrying out the legal responsibilities of classroom teachers when and if you assume substitute-teaching responsibility in your assignments (i.e., confidentiality, child abuse, etc.), pursuant to California Penal Code Section 11166.5.
- Respond to required assignments, evaluations, and surveys of your clinical practice experience.

COOPERATING TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES: the cooperating teacher plays a very important role during clinical practice, serving as teacher educator, resource person, role model, helper, collaborator, and confidante. At the same time, however, the cooperating teacher bears primary responsibility to their students. Their learning must be always a top priority.

- When possible, meet with the teacher candidate prior to the beginning of clinical practice to provide initial orientation to the classroom and the experience.
- Provide opportunities for the teacher candidate to function as a professional colleague during clinical practice and encourage the teacher candidate to become involved in professional organizations and to participate in other professional growth opportunities, such as school district workshops.
- Assist the teacher candidate in refining and developing skills related to subject matter teaching.
- Provide consistent/ongoing mentoring, collaboration, and supervision of the teacher candidate’s work, treating the teacher candidate as a ‘co-teacher’ in lesson planning, instructional delivery, assessment, and reflection processes.
- Provide feedback on the clinical practice program to the CTC and to Cal Poly, as requested.
- Engage in professional development and training opportunities, as required by the CTC and the SOE.

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES: The university supervisor is a key member of the supervisory team, with responsibilities that are similar to, but also somewhat different from, those of the cooperating teacher. The university supervisor is the primary evaluator. In consultation with the cooperating teacher, it is the university supervisor who determines the grade that the teacher candidate receives.

- Lead efforts to coordinate and inform the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher about the clinical practice structure and requirements.



- Support the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher to understand the clinical practice observation protocol, observation tool, and the criteria used to evaluate performance.
- Visit, observe, conduct instructional conferences, and cooperatively supervise the teacher candidate. This typically includes a minimum of four observations per quarter, and any required mid-quarter and final assessment conferences as outlined by the program.
- Cooperatively complete and submit evaluations for the teacher candidate. Consider cooperating teacher input when identifying the appropriate grade for the teacher candidate.
- Submit grades by the grading deadline via procedures defined by Academic Records
- Provide feedback on the clinical practice program to the CTC and to Cal Poly, as requested.
- Engage in on-going professional development opportunities, as required by the CTC and the SOE.

SCHOOL DISTRICT & SCHOOL SITE RESPONSIBILITIES: The districts and the school sites are responsible for providing a supportive environment for the teacher candidate.

- The principal is encouraged to participate in the orientation process that helps to introduce the teacher candidate to the unique education environment at the school site, including school rules, discipline policies, curriculum, school map, district map, location of support personnel, materials, district policies, professional responsibilities associated with the teaching profession, and the legal implications thereof.
- The site principal may be asked to observe teacher candidates by the cooperating teacher and/or university supervisor.
- The school district and the clinical practice coordinator will collaborate in selecting cooperating teachers and assigning placement of teacher candidates in a timely fashion.

COTEACHING

A key component of effective clinical practice is understanding that a teacher candidate and a cooperating teacher are engaged in coteaching. That is, they are both working to further the growth, development, and learning of a classroom of children. As such, the nature of their relationship is key to how well they engage in coteaching. Close communication is needed to determine how they will each contribute to the running of the classroom and the conduct of instruction. In a well-developed coteaching relationship, the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher work together daily in lesson planning, conducting instruction, and evaluating student learning from assessments. There are a variety of specific instructional strategies that have been defined to assist cooperating teachers and their teacher candidates in identifying ways they can choose to work together during classroom instruction. Examples are: one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist; and station teaching. Further information about coteaching strategies and coteaching as a concept are provided by the program via workshops and the [coteaching website](#).



III. CLINICAL PRACTICE PLACEMENTS POLICY

PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING PLACEMENTS: Candidates may **NOT** make their own clinical practice placement arrangements. The clinical practice coordinator, with the guidance and input of the program coordinator and faculty, will place teacher candidates in their clinical practice assignments. Placing teacher candidates in schools is an extremely important task that requires the utmost in professionalism. Therefore, the clinical practice coordinator and program coordinator are responsible for collaborating with districts and school sites to negotiate appropriate placements for teacher candidates. Teacher candidates are not to ask specific school administrators or teachers to request a special placement.

Clinical practice assignments are arranged in school districts that have a current Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the School of Education. School placements are typically located between San Miguel and Lompoc; teacher candidates should expect to drive between 30 minutes and 1 hour to their school sites and should plan their schedules with these commute times in mind.

REQUESTING SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Candidates may request special clinical practice placement assignments for significant reasons, such as a medical or physical limitation. For these requests, written documentation is required.

REQUESTING CHANGE OF PLACEMENT: Candidates with concerns about the clinical practice experience (such as cooperating teacher or clinical practice placement) are encouraged to direct those concerns in writing to their clinical practice supervisor, their program advisor, their program coordinator, and the clinical practice coordinator (per the SOE Grievance Policy detailed in the General Policies handbook). The clinical practice coordinator will record and monitor the recurrence of concerns, communicate with program coordinators and clinical practice personnel, and facilitate in determining if urgent issues require immediate resolution. If the clinical practice coordinator and program coordinator are unable to resolve the issue, candidates may appeal to the SOE Director in writing.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY OF PLACEMENTS: The Cal Poly School of Education is committed to preparing future educators who are ready to serve a diverse student population. This commitment is shaped by our accountability to CTC and Cal Poly policies, as well as our personal commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity (outlined previously in this handbook).

Whenever possible, teaching candidates participate in fieldwork experiences that offer significant exposure to school settings that reflect the full diversity of California public schools. In accordance with CTC guidelines, diverse clinical practice experiences include racial and ethnic diversity of students, students from families in lower socio-economic income ranges, English learners from a variety of language backgrounds, and inclusiveness for students with disabilities (CTC Guidance on clinical practice supervision of teacher candidates, p. 5). Additionally, the SOE makes an effort to expose future multiple subject and special education teachers to a range of grade levels across their various clinical practice placements.

The clinical practice coordinator and the program coordinators carefully consider exposure to diversity when assigning clinical practice placements, which is an added reason why candidates are prohibited from making their own clinical practice arrangements. Many of the diverse communities that partner with the SOE lay outside the immediate San Luis Obispo area, and so students should be prepared to commute between 30 minutes to 1 hour in order to gain exposure to a diverse range of school settings.



IV. SUBSTITUTE TEACHING POLICY

During clinical practice fieldwork, teacher candidates may have an opportunity to serve as a substitute teacher. This policy applies ONLY to substitute teaching in the field on days that are part of Cal Poly fieldwork. It does NOT apply to days when the candidate is not required to be in the field.

- Candidates can only substitute teach in their cooperating teacher's classroom. If there is a shortage of substitutes in the school on a particular day, the school can choose to have the teacher candidate act as a substitute for their cooperating teacher, and the cooperating teacher can be the substitute teacher in another classroom.
- During *Clinical Practice I*, candidates may serve as a substitute for their cooperating teacher for a maximum of 3 days.
- During *Clinical Practice II*, candidates may serve as a substitute for their cooperating teacher for a maximum of 5 days.
- During *Clinical Practice III*, candidates may serve as a substitute for their cooperating teacher for a maximum of 10 days.

To be eligible for substitute teaching, candidates must complete required forms for a school district, and they must hold the appropriate permit. Paid teaching assignments involving substitute teaching cannot be used to fulfill required days in the field for Cal Poly fieldwork courses.



V. STRIKES OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

The university shall maintain a position of neutrality in any strike or labor action involving school districts with which it has contracts (or agreements) for the placement of teacher candidates or other students engaged in supervised fieldwork activities. In the event of a strike or other labor action involving a cooperating agency, the teacher candidate and other fieldwork students, if working in a unit that is directly involved, will be **automatically withdrawn from the assignment** and further information will be provided.

It is the responsibility of the teacher candidate or fieldwork student to notify the university that a strike or other labor action has begun, or that a strike, etc., will begin at a certain time. Should a teacher candidate or other fieldwork student accept employment with an emergency permit during a strike or labor action, the student's teacher candidate or fieldwork student status will be **terminated**. As a result of such employment, the teacher candidate will receive a grade of 'No Credit' for clinical practice, and the individual shall not be identified as a university teacher candidate or fieldwork student. Teacher candidates and fieldwork students are not to be coerced into crossing picket lines, nor are they to be coerced into joining a strike. Allegations of coercion are to be reported to their respective program coordinators.



VI. WITHDRAWAL FROM CLINICAL PRACTICE

If a teacher candidate withdraws from clinical practice for medical, economic, or other reasons, they must notify the clinical practice coordinator and SOE credential office as soon as possible. If they then wish to be assigned in the next or another quarter, the candidate must submit an updated student information form, a new program application, and a signed letter requesting the new assignment. The letter should be submitted to the SOE credential office along with the program application. In some instances, the candidate may be required to submit a new application to the University. Communication with the SOE credential office is key to determining whether this applies to a candidate's situation.