



Clinical Practice and Field Experience Guidelines for DCSD Teachers & Paraprofessionals

PURPOSE

This document is to provide guidance and expectations to DCSD teachers and paraprofessionals in educator preparation programs seeking clinical practice and field experiences within the DeKalb County School District.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION RULE 505-3-.01

Requirements for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Programs, states that “teacher candidates must spend a minimum of one full semester or the equivalent in residencies or internships” (2020, p. 15), and a year-long residency is preferable.

DEFINITIONS

Candidates/Teacher Candidates: Individuals enrolled in programs for the initial or advanced preparation of educators, programs for the continuing professional development of educators, or programs for the preparation of other professional school personnel. Candidates are distinguished from students in B/P-12 schools. (The term enrolled is used in the GaPSC approval process to mean the candidate is admitted and taking classes.)

Educator Preparation Provider (EPP): The institution of higher education (IHE), college, school, department, agency, or other administrative body responsible for managing or coordinating all programs offered for the initial and continuing preparation of teachers and other school personnel, regardless of where these programs are administratively housed (formerly referred to as the professional education unit).

Clinical Educators: All educator preparation provider (EPP) and P-12 school-based individuals, including classroom teachers, who assess, support, and develop a candidate’s knowledge, skills, or professional dispositions at some stage in the clinical experiences. The term Clinical Educators is intended to be inclusive of the roles of Mentor Teacher, B/P-12 Supervisor, and Faculty Supervisor. EPPs are expected to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all clinical educators with whom candidates interact.

Clinical Practice: Culminating residency (formerly referred to as student teaching) or internship experiences with candidates placed in classrooms for at least one (1) full semester where they experience intensive and extensive practices in which they are fully immersed in the learning community and provided opportunities to develop and demonstrate competence in the professional roles for which they are preparing. In initial preparation programs in Service and Leadership fields, candidates will complete such culminating residency or internship experiences in placements that allow the knowledge, skills, and dispositions included in the programs to be practiced and applied. In non-traditional preparation programs, such as GaTAPP, clinical practice is job-embedded as candidates must be hired as a classroom teacher to be admitted to the program.

Field Experiences: Activities that include organized and sequenced engagement of candidates in settings providing opportunities to observe, practice, and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions delineated in institutional, state, and national standards. The experiences must be systematically designed and sequenced to increase the complexity and levels of engagement with which candidates apply, reflect upon, and expand their knowledge and skills. Since observation is a less rigorous method of learning, emphasis should be on field experience sequences requiring active professional practice or demonstration and including substantive work with B/P-12 students and B/P-12 personnel as appropriate. In non-traditional preparation programs, such as GaTAPP, field experiences occur outside candidates' classrooms with students with diverse learning needs and varied backgrounds in at least two (2) settings during the clinical practice.

The EPP and Clinical Educator must partner to evaluate a candidate's abilities to assess, plan, and instruct. This evaluation should include effective classroom management strategies.

REQUIREMENTS

Clinical Practice (culminating residency, formerly referred to as student teaching, or internship)

- To complete a partial or full semester of clinical experiences, **where the candidate serves as the teacher of record in his/her assigned classroom, and where the grade level and certification sought is consistent with his/her current job assignment, the employee is not required to take a leave of absence**. This procedure is conditional, based on the college and university requirements for program completion.
- To complete a partial or full semester of clinical experience, **where the candidate serves as the teacher of record in his or her assigned classroom and where the grade level and certification sought is different from his/her current job assignment, the employee is required to take a leave of absence**. The employee must leave his/her assigned building. The employee may return to his or her previous assignment once the clinical experience has been completed provided the vacancy is still available. This procedure is conditional, based on the college and university requirements for program completion.

Field Experience

- To complete a field experience which requires the candidate to teach unit lessons, conduct tutoring, and observe children for any amount of hours where teaching duties are not required, and **where the grade level and certification sought is consistent with his/her current job assignment, the employee is not required to take a leave of absence**. This procedure is conditional, based on the college and university requirements for program completion.
- To complete a field experience which requires the candidate to teach unit lessons, conduct tutoring, and observe children for any number of hours where teaching duties are not required, **and where the grade level and certification sought is different from his/her current job assignment, the field experience should be completed during "off the clock" hours (before or after school)**. If the experiences need to be completed during the instructional day, the employee must sign out, complete the assignment, and sign in again once the assignment is completed. **This action is only permissible if the school/principal can accommodate the modified schedule and the field experience request does not exceed 80 contact hours**. If the school/principal cannot accommodate the modified schedule, **or if the field experience exceeds 80 hours, the employee is required to take a leave of absence which includes personal leave time (if available) and leave his/her assigned building to complete the field experience**. The employee may return to his/her previous assignment once the field experience has been completed, provided the vacancy is still available. This procedure is conditional, based on the college and university requirements for program completion.

NEXT STEPS TO COORDINATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

If you ARE required to take a leave of absence, complete the following steps to apply for professional leave:

- Complete Leave Application
 - Request Leave Application from the Bookkeeper/Timekeeper of the school/department or access via the employee portal, Human Resources section.
- Submit Leave Application and supporting documentation to Leave Administration Department at least six weeks prior to the leave of absence
 - Submit application, unofficial copy of transcript, and proof of current program enrollment to leaves@dekalbschoolsga.org or via fax at 678.875.5200

The Leave Administration team will:

- Notify employees within five (5) business days via email of eligibility status for requested leave (eligibility is defined as working the required number of days prior to taking a professional leave)
- Review application/documentation and make determination – approval or denial
- Notify employee AND supervisor/manager via email of final decision within five (5) business days of receipt of required documents

*Important Note: It is the employee's responsibility to submit a Statement of Leave for any days absent during any approved leave of absence to their school's/department's Bookkeeper/Timekeeper.

If you are NOT required to take a leave of absence, complete the following steps to coordinate a placement for clinical or field experience.

- Contact the Field Experience Placement Coordinator in the Professional Learning Department at Chelonnda_Seroyer@dekalbschoolsga.org OR 678-676-0335.