Positive Professional Relationships

Competency

The cooperating teacher establishes and maintains positive professional relationships.

Key Method

The cooperating teacher uses techniques that encourage and promote meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and positive professional relationships with their student teacher. These relationships help student teachers from all backgrounds - across race, class, language, and identity - feel respected and supported.

Method Components

Being deliberate about initial interactions leads to stronger relationships. In a student teaching or internship situation, the cooperating teacher and student teacher can create a positive working and learning environment by investing time and thought into initial conversations and setting expectations.

Typical problems that develop during student teaching include: misunderstandings about entry-level knowledge, lack of cultural awareness, differing expectations regarding professional conduct, misunderstandings related to responsibilities, lack of information about the school calendar or events, and inaccurate application of past experiences to this student

teaching experience. Intentionally addressing typical issues in advance helps establish expectations and prevent bias-based conflict.

Components of Positive Professional Relationships

Building Professional Relationships
Through your interactions, you'll both set up your student for success in their current placement and prepare them for their role in a future school. Through explicit instruction and modeling, you help ensure that your student teacher can carry the skills for positive professional relationships into their first and future positions.

- **Initial Time Investment**: Address typical issues, common concerns, and expectations at the beginning to form a trusting professional relationship. Create an action plan with items that are most important or likely to need clarity. Ensure that your student teacher is prepared to start well in their new setting.
- **Professional Conduct**: Review school and program rules and policies related to professional expectations. Consider:
    - Time expectations
    - Dress code
    - Location of copiers and curriculum materials
    - Processes and communication within the school
    - Introductions and contact information for other staff
- **Who We Are**: Consider your roles and responsibilities separately and together; positive interdependence is needed. Establish the relationship and set aside time to discuss questions.
- **Diversity Issues**: Differences may exist across generations, backgrounds, life experiences, perspectives, and cultures. Be prepared to help your student teacher navigate this new environment by naming diversity issues explicitly - such as race, language, class, disability, and immigration status - and framing these differences as assets, not deficits.

Maintaining Professional Relationships

As your time with the student teacher progresses, you'll have ongoing opportunities to refine and develop their professionalism. Be sure to include:

- **Professional Consideration**: Help arrange space for the student teacher or intern. Ensure they have a place for personal items and a dedicated place to work on reflection and lesson planning.

- **Regular Check-in**: Regularly check in with the student teacher or intern. Provide space and time for questions and confidential conversations. By scheduling reflection time, both you and the student teacher can thoughtfully reflect on events and nurture their professional growth.
- **Deliberate Effort**: Periodically revisit welcoming information and expectations. Continue to think intentionally about managing differences, listening, and nonverbal communication.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Bjordal, Cato, Mathisen, Petter, Wennergren, Ann-Christine, & Thornberg, Fredrik. (2024). Challenges of the supervision process in the teacher education practicum – A qualitative research review. Teaching and Teacher Education, Volume 146. Retrieved from: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X24001513

Hoffman, James, Wetzel, Melissa Mosley , Maloch, Beth , Greeter, Erin , Taylor, Taylor, DeJulio, Samual, Vlach, Saba Khan (2015). What can we learn from studying the coaching interactions between cooperating teachers and preservice teachers? A literature review. Teaching and Teacher Education.Volume 52. ISSN 0742-051X, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.09.004.

Hurwitz, S. C., Enz, B. J., & Carlile, B. J. (2006). The student teaching experience: A developmental approach and coaching the student teacher. Kendall Hunt Publishing. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303327308_The_Student_Teaching_Experience

Izadinia, M. (2016). An investigation into mentor teacher-preservice teacher relationship and its contribution to development of preservice teachers' professional identity. Retrieved from http://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1792

Lu, Hsiu-Lien, "Ways for Cooperating Teachers to Build a Positive Relationship with Student Teachers" (2012). SoTL Commons Conference. 52. http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlcommons/SoTL/2012/52

Resources

Readings

6 Ways to Help Student Teachers Succeed

9 Tips for Supervising Student Teachers

Building Great Work Relationships

The Student and Cooperating Teacher Relationship

Making the Most of Student Teaching: Great Activities

4 Ways to Mentor Student Teachers

A Solid Foundation for a Mentoring Relationship

Response: Student Teachers Should 'Be Colleagues' (Opinion)

Templates & Submission References

Action Plan Template

Case Study

How to Write a SMART Goal

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the microcredential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and be proficient for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

350-500 words
Please use the suggested word count as a guide to answer the contextual questions below. This will help our assessor understand your current context.

Please don't include any information that would identify you to reviewers.

Using the components of building and maintaining a positive professional relationship (listed in the Method Components section), respond to:

- What characteristics do your positive professional relationships have in common?
- Choose one person with whom you currently have a positive professional relationship. Using the components of building and maintaining positive professional relationships, answer:
    - What was your initial introduction like?
    - How did your initial interactions account for diverse perspectives?
    - What specific components were present that put your relationship on the right path?
    - What actions do you or your colleague take to maintain this relationship?
    - How did diverse perspectives (race, class, language, disability, etc.) shape that relationship, and what do you do to avoid deficit framing?

Passing: Responses completely answer each question using specific examples from personal experience. Answers show how the components of a positive professional relationship were evident (or not) in these examples. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this microcredential, submit the following two artifacts as evidence of your learning. You may use templates linked in resources.

**Please don't include any information that will identify you or your students to reviewers*.

Artifact 1: Action Plan
Using the Action Plan Template in the Resources section, create and implement an action plan for building and sustaining a positive, welcoming experience for your student teacher.

Part 1 - Action Plan

Create two SMART goals for creating a positive, welcoming experience for your student teacher, and two SMART goals for maintaining this experience over time. Add a row to the template for each goal. For each goal, identify strategies that are doable and relevant to your specific context, and explain how the goal applies components of a positive professional relationship.

Note: for support in writing SMART goals, see the Resource section

Part 2 - Implementation
Implement your action plan for four weeks.

Part 3 - Summary of Results
After implementation, write a 200-400 word summary of your results that addresses:

- Did you meet your goal(s)?
- Why or why not?
- What modifications would you make to achieve greater success?
- What are your next steps?

Please Note: The preferred file format for this artifact is PDF (File → Download → PDF). If you choose to submit a link to the document instead, please ensure that your sharing settings allow anyone with a link to view.

Artifact 2: Case Study

- After reading the case study in the Resources section, rewrite the scenario to demonstrate a positive cooperating teacher relationship.
- Identify which components of building a positive professional relationship are present in the original scenario.
- Rewrite the scenario to show how you would handle the situation in a way that better supports a positive professional relationship between the cooperating teacher and student teacher. Include differences in race, language, or class between the cooperating teacher and student teacher, and show how positive relationships can bridge those differences without erasing them.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	**Basic**	**Developing**
Artifact 1: Action Plan	Applies components of a positive professional relationship to each goal and: all parts of the action plan are complete, goals are SMART, strategies are doable and relevant to context, the plan was implemented as described, and the summary of results addresses all four reflection questions with specific evidence	Components of a positive professional relationship were applied to only some goals and/or: not all parts of the plan are complete, goals aren't SMART, strategies aren't doable or relevant to context, or the summary of results addresses only some of the reflection questions	Action plan is incomplete, goals or strategies are unrealistic, there's no reference to components of positive professional relationships, and/or implementation or the summary of results is missing
Artifact 2: Case Study	Explicitly identifies and applies the components of a positive professional relationship in a rewritten scenario that demonstrates the cooperating teacher's success with the student teacher.	Rewrites the scenario to show improved success, but doesn't explicitly identify or fully apply the components of a positive professional relationship.	Rewrites the scenario, but there's no clear evidence of improved success in the cooperating teacher relationship.

Part 3 Reflection

350-00 words
Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this microcredential. For tips on writing a strong reflection, review the following resource:

How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?

Please don't include any information that will identify you to your reviewers.

Reflect on what you learned by addressing the following:

- How has incorporating positive professional relationships affected your current practice?
- How will you intentionally account for diverse perspectives and challenge structures that undermine those relationships?
- What impact will this have on your practice in the future?

Passing: Reflection is complete, organized, and easy to understand. Answers include specific examples and next steps that are relevant to the components of positive professional relationships.