

COMPANY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

BUILDING A LEARNING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR STUDENT TEACHER



DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES CENTER

COOPERATING TEACHER BENEFITS**PRACTICAL HELP**

- ▶ Having another perspective on children and situations
- ▶ Having additional interests or strengths represented
- ▶ Having another educator to work with children

PROFESSIONAL BOOST

- ▶ Forcing a clarification of goals and assessment
- ▶ Having a source of fresh ideas and new thinking in the field
- ▶ Making possible the rewards of mentorship

STUDENT TEACHER BENEFITS**PRACTICAL HELP**

- ▶ Having a laboratory for learning pedagogy
- ▶ Having a laboratory for learning classroom management
- ▶ Having someone to share the load

PROFESSIONAL BOOST

- ▶ Having an accomplished mentor
- ▶ Having a supportive mentor
- ▶ Having a colleague in learning

COOPERATING TEACHER CHALLENGES**PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES**

- ▶ Needing to compensate if children are learning less
- ▶ Deciding what to do if practices conflict
- ▶ Needing to intervene if children are feeling unsafe

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ Feeling judged
- ▶ Having relationships with children change
- ▶ Feeling the responsibility to give honest, constructive feedback even when it might be hard for the student teacher to hear

STUDENT TEACHER CHALLENGES**PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES**

- ▶ Being a guest in someone else's classroom
- ▶ Deciding what to do if practices conflict
- ▶ Having authority undermined

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

- ▶ Believing that one's ideas are being dismissed
- ▶ Dealing with rivalries
- ▶ Asking for and getting honest, useful feedback

TOOL2 Welcome

- ▶ Put the student teacher's name on the classroom door with yours and set up a desk or create a special space for him.
- ▶ Engage students in preparing a written guide to your classroom.
- ▶ Ask the children to write individual welcome notes about themselves.
- ▶ Have a community circle meeting to introduce and welcome the student teacher, and have students describe class norms.
- ▶ Encourage the student teacher to introduce himself to the class in an engaging way.
- ▶ Invite the student teacher to create a "special person" display.
- ▶ Invite volunteers to take the student teacher on a tour of the school.
- ▶ Consistently say "Mr. (STUDENT TEACHER) and I" when talking to the class.
- ▶ Co-teach with the student teacher, especially early on.
- ▶ Introduce the student teacher to other staff members and the principal.
- ▶ Arrange for the student teacher to observe in other teachers' classrooms.

Some cooperating teachers say that letting a student teacher into the tight-knit circle of relationships in the classroom can be hard, and that not just one or two but a number of self-conscious efforts such as those described in "Tool 2: Welcome" are important—especially if it is the middle of the school year. A warm welcome also serves as the first step in building the reserve of trust that you all may need farther down the line. With all the stumbling that lies ahead for the student teacher, the more you are able to integrate him or her into the classroom community, the more likely he or she is to experience a buffer of good will when it's most needed.

Exchanging Information about the Children

One of the most effective ways to integrate your student teacher into the classroom is to spend time exchanging information about what you are each learning about the children in your class. In contrast to the potentially more difficult time you spend analyzing teaching performances—both of yours—sharing information and observations about students allows you to appreciate your common delight in the children in your care and your concern for them as well.

Information Exchange TOOL3

FORMAL STRUCTURES TO TRY

- ▶ Have the student teacher keep a notebook tracking the strengths and weaknesses of each child or a subgroup of children. Also have the student teacher make notes about the ways to deal with these strengths and weaknesses. Periodically review these observations together and decide how to respond to the children.
- ▶ From time to time, ask the student teacher to observe closely and record the behavior of a child or small group that is having difficulty. Together develop ways to better meet each child's needs.
- ▶ Choose a child (or at most two) that you both focus on for a day. Try to observe the day through the eyes of the child. Debrief your observations at the end of the day, drawing on immediate observations and past interactions with the child.
- ▶ Each of you observe different children, but with the same focusing question—for example, How is the child building autonomy? or How does the child collaborate with others? Share your observations and their implications for how to work with these children.

PRINCIPLES FOR LEARNING MORE

- ▶ Model and explain the importance of making a special effort to develop friendly relationships with the children who exhibit the most frustrating behavior, since the typical and least effective response is to ignore such children when possible.
- ▶ Share relevant information about children's families with the student teacher so that she can understand the children better.
- ▶ Ask your student teacher to apply the principles of her teacher education program to what she is noticing in your classroom about children's development—academically, socially, ethically, and motivationally.

When You Are Observed TOOL 4

OBSERVATIONS

- ▶ Choose situations carefully to maximize student teacher's learning.
- ▶ Share your goals with the student teacher in advance.
- ▶ Urge the student teacher to take notes. You'll both forget!
- ▶ Sometimes focus your student teacher's observations on specific aspects of the teaching day—the morning meeting and transition to the first curriculum activity, the reading and discussion of a story, and so on.
- ▶ Sometimes focus your student teacher's observations on a few children and have him "track" these children's experience with the lesson.

DEBRIEFING TOGETHER

- ▶ Encourage the student teacher to revisit your specific goals to see how they played out.
- ▶ Invite the student teacher to tell you what he saw and ask you questions about why you did what you did.
- ▶ If things did not go well (it happens to the best of us), this might be an opportunity to ask the student teacher for any suggestions for the future.
- ▶ If the student teacher misses things that you did that you think are important, point these out.
- ▶ Perhaps the student teacher would have done something quite different from what you did—what might she have tried, and why?
- ▶ Write down the things you are learning from each other. You'll both forget!
- ▶ Help your student teacher make arrangements to observe other classrooms in the school to gain exposure to a variety of teaching styles and approaches.

When You Observe **TOOLS**

OBSERVATIONS

- ▶ Choose situations carefully to maximize student teacher's learning.
- ▶ Ask the student teacher in advance about his broad or specific goals, or ask if there's anything particular he would like you to look for.
- ▶ Take notes. You'll both forget!
- ▶ When possible, map your observations onto his goals for the day or activity.
- ▶ Sometimes focus your observations on specific aspects of the teaching day.
- ▶ Sometimes focus your observations on specific aspects of his practice—how he gives directions, gets children to shift from one activity to the next, facilitates discussion, and so on.

DEBRIEFING

- ▶ Ask the student teacher about her goals and how she's feeling about the way things went. What went well? What was challenging?
- ▶ Tell the student teacher what you saw and ask questions about why she chose to do things one way or another.
- ▶ Ask the student teacher what she thinks she could have done or might do differently next time.
- ▶ Share your own suggestions for next time with the student teacher.
- ▶ Urge her to take notes about anything she hopes to remember!

modifying lessons is something you're going to find yourself doing—and it's okay to do that.' After lunch I did the activity again, this time in partnerships, as she suggested, and it was much better. It was helpful to me and good for her to see her ideas implemented. She saw that I respected her advice and that it was okay for a teacher to change directions and admit to the kids that she's not perfect." (COOPERATING TEACHER)

When You Observe the Student Teacher

Observing and coaching the student teacher are two of the primary roles of being a cooperating teacher. As your student teacher takes on responsibility in the classroom, you are always watching what he or she does, what is working well, and where he or she

TOOL 6 What You Can Do

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

- ▶ Help the student teacher reveal himself in ongoing ways.
- ▶ Help the student teacher create opportunities for children to share about themselves.
- ▶ Help the student teacher convey to students "we're in this together."
- ▶ Help the student teacher learn to recognize and treat each child as a special person.
- ▶ Help the student teacher enjoy the children and be himself in whatever ways feel right for him.
- ▶ Introduce the student teacher to parents and families.
- ▶ Facilitate the student teacher's communication with parents and families.

ESTABLISH AUTHORITY AND CONTROL OF THE CLASSROOM

- ▶ Anticipate that the student teacher will have different needs for power assertion than you do.
- ▶ Think through with the student teacher how she will handle some typical problem situations.
- ▶ Encourage the student teacher to choose two or three specific techniques and make a conscious effort to use them until they feel comfortable to her.
- ▶ Help the student teacher think about ways to exercise power that are less damaging than others to the sense of community.
- ▶ Let the student teacher take over classroom management in "chunks."
- ▶ Arm the student teacher with teaching strategies that make the task clear, and so eliminate some potential behavior problems.
- ▶ Help the student teacher feel more comfortable acting with assurance.
- ▶ Talk about when it is appropriate to listen to students' concerns about a particular decision.
- ▶ Have the student teacher observe you for control techniques, and then debrief with her.
- ▶ Be careful not to let the children pit you and the student teacher against each other.

What You Can Do TOOL 6

MAKE THE VALUES CLEAR AND CONSISTENT

- ▶ Help the student teacher be clear about the ethical principles that frame your classroom.
- ▶ Explain to the student teacher how classroom procedures reflect the importance of fairness, personal responsibility, kindness, and so forth.
- ▶ Share and post a list of ideas generated by the children for solving common problems.
- ▶ Suggest that it is sometimes helpful to introduce the discussion of a problem with a personal story.
- ▶ Encourage the student teacher to have one-on-one problem-solving conversations with students.
- ▶ Remind the student teacher to assume the best possible motive for misbehavior consistent with the facts.
- ▶ Help the student teacher find ways to tap children's intrinsic motivation to be good people and to learn.
- ▶ Have the student teacher observe the classroom and your interactions with children through a values lens, and then debrief with her.

ENGAGE EVERY LEARNER

- ▶ Describe how you get children motivated and engaged in learning activities.
- ▶ Describe how you design lessons to keep students motivated and engaged.
- ▶ Sit down and co-plan lessons with your student teacher.
- ▶ "Shadow" the student teacher's teaching.
- ▶ Use your teaching not as a model but as a text.

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TOOL 1 First Meetings

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Share some personal background

- ▶ How did you each choose teaching and what have your experiences been?
- ▶ What is the student teacher experiencing in her teacher preparation program?

Tell the student teacher informally about the school

- ▶ Describe the school mission and its philosophy, leadership, teachers, students, families, and community.

- ▶ Describe individual children and the class as a whole.
- ▶ What has happened so far?
- ▶ Where are the children academically, socially, and ethnically?
- ▶ What has been challenging?
- ▶ What has gone well?
- ▶ What's next?

GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY

Share your goals for the classroom

- ▶ What are you trying to accomplish this year?
- ▶ In what ways are you trying to help children develop?
- ▶ Ask the student teacher to share his own goals for the classroom and what he understands to be the goals of his teacher preparation program.
- ▶ Discuss how your views might be similar to and/or different from each other's.

Talk about social and ethical development

- ▶ How do moral issues play a role in the classroom?
- ▶ What kind of learning community are you trying to create?
- ▶ Find out more about your student teacher's perspective.

Talk about classroom management

- ▶ Explain your approach to classroom management and discipline.
- ▶ How did you create norms for behavior, and what are they?
- ▶ How do you help students take responsibility for their behavior and learning? What do you do to help students learn to resolve conflicts?
- ▶ Ask the student teacher to share his reactions, views, and expectations with regard to classroom management.
- ▶ Ask the student teacher what his teacher preparation program teaches about classroom management.

Talk about curriculum

- ▶ Talk about content and how you approach it in your curriculum.
- ▶ What concepts, skills, and strategies are you trying to teach children?

First Meetings TOOL 1

- ▶ Ask the student teacher to talk about special interests related to curriculum, and what he might want to focus on during his practicum.

- ▶ Ask the student teacher to explain the expectations and requirements of his teacher education program as they relate to curriculum.

EXPECTATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Clarify the student teacher's expectations

- ▶ Ask the student teacher what she would like to take on during her time in your classroom.
- ▶ What do observing and assisting mean to each of you?
- ▶ How much is she hoping to teach or co-teach?
- ▶ What is her schedule going to be?

Share your thoughts about your role

- ▶ Will you observe and offer feedback?
- ▶ Will you co-teach?
- ▶ How will you hand off increasing responsibility?

Plan for planning and debriefing

- ▶ Share ideas about how each of you would like to handle planning and debriefing.

Plan an introduction to the kids and their families

- ▶ Talk about your plans for introducing the student teacher to the class.
- ▶ Describe how you might introduce her to parents.
- ▶ Encourage her to come up with her own ways of introducing herself to both.

Talk about coats, books, and bodies

- ▶ Make sure your student teacher has a home base and a place for her things.
- ▶ Talk about where she will be while you are teaching.
- ▶ Talk about where you will be while she is teaching.

Reiterate "we're in this together"

- ▶ Be sure you've been clear about the things that are really important to you.
- ▶ Be sure you've communicated that you are open to learning a lot from her.
- ▶ Be sure she's had a chance to talk about what she's looking forward to.
- ▶ Invite her to talk about anything she is feeling concerned about.

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