

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #3: Professional Support¹

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Introduction

In this third publication of the *Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring* series, the mentorship area of focus will be on that of professional support. Professional support is accomplished by helping new teachers approach the world of education and the diverse system in which educators learn to navigate (Alemdag & Simsek, 2017). Another aspect of professional support includes guiding student teachers to understand the importance of building relationships within their school community and developing a positive view of teaching. This publication series serves to guide cooperating teachers and those who support cooperating teachers in becoming effective mentors. This publication will break down the major areas of professional support and provide real-world examples of how cooperating teachers can implement them during the internship. This publication also provides an overview of the *Best Practices for Mentoring* series in Appendix A.

Strategies for Professional Support

Use observational data as the basis for feedback sessions.

When observing student teachers, cooperating teachers should take notes based on their interactions with students and their instructional material. Using observational data as the basis for feedback sessions increases the student teachers' self-awareness. The use of observational data allows the student teacher to understand the importance of utilizing evidence to improve their own teaching and the learning gains of their students (University Center for Teaching and Learning, 2022). Some examples of using observational data as the basis for feedback sessions are (1) determining a specific purpose for the observation (i.e., determining a specific teaching practice to evaluate, choosing one class period to observe, or specifically looking at classroom management); (2) utilizing an observation-based form to record evidence-based data (Figure 1); and (3) discussing the evidence-based data during feedback sessions without assumptions or personal bias in the conversation.

Teaching Performance Review

Agricultural Education & Communication

University of Florida

Teacher: Alberta Gator

Date: 02/24/22

Observer: Cooperating Teacher

Lesson Objective: Introductory Animal Science: Identifying Correct Terminology

Effective Performance (Things That Worked Well)	Suggestions / Comments / Questions
Greeting all students at the door as they enter class	-Why do you think it's effective to greet students for each class that is entering your room?
	-What are different strategies you can use to engage students after they come in?
Recapping the previous lesson and reviewing important dates on the board.	-waited 3 seconds before providing the answer to the students -- Make sure you give the students time to think and answer.
	-3 out of 25 students responded by calling out answers -- How can you ensure that others have an opportunity to speak?
Great visuals and questioning during your discussion.	-utilized front of the room -- Try moving around the room.
	-3 side conversations occurred -- How could moving around the room alleviate these convos?

Figure 1. Example Observation Form (Two-Column).

Encourage the student teacher to take the lead in evaluating their teaching.

Encouraging the student teacher to take a lead in evaluating their teaching allows the student teacher the opportunity to self-reflect. Some examples of the student teacher taking a lead in the evaluation of their teaching are (1) giving the student teacher the opportunity to share their thoughts and feeling about a lesson before offering any praise or feedback from our own perspective and (2) providing the student teacher with examples of how self-reflection can be conducted after completing a lesson or unit.

Introduce the student teacher to the school community.

Introducing the student teacher to the school community increases their visibility to their students, to the multiple stakeholders at the school, and potentially beyond the school and into the local community. Student teachers will learn how to interact with the school administration and staff, as well as the broader community. Some examples of how to introduce the student teacher to the school community are (1) having the student teacher go everywhere you go; (2) immediately introducing the student teacher to other teachers, school staff, and administration; and (3) explaining the importance of

building relationships with all members of the school team, and how it positively affects their role as a teacher.

Help develop positive views of teaching.

Helping student teachers develop a positive view of teaching helps student teachers to build resilience and a positive mindset for when they are facing some of the more challenging aspects of being a teacher. Some examples of helping the student teacher develop a positive view of teaching are (1) speaking positively about teaching, while acknowledging that not all days are easy; (2) openly discussing negative comments that may be made by other teachers, students, or others, and addressing why comments may have been said; and (3) demonstrating ways to sustain and increase personal happiness and sustainability within the career.

Share approaches for effectively managing the administrative aspects of teaching, including building effective relationships with administrators and other teachers.

Sharing approaches for effectively managing the administrative aspects of teaching allows the student teacher to be fully involved in all roles they may have as a teacher. Some examples of sharing approaches for effectively managing the administrative aspects of

teaching are (1) allowing student teachers to observe your use of management tools, including gradebooks, attendance systems, and other items such as evaluation or financial forms; (2) encouraging the student teacher to take on some of these tasks, as allowable in your school or district; and (3) explaining to the student teacher how important it is to connect and maintain a positive rapport with staff members who help make resources, travel, and student leadership organizations run smoothly (bookkeeper, school secretary, principal, etc.).

Encourage the student teacher to maintain active memberships in professional organizations.

Maintaining active membership in professional organizations increases the student teacher's involvement in the organizations that can help them to sustain their career, as well as gives the student teacher additional resources to support their teaching role. Furthermore, involvement in the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) and the Florida Association of Agricultural Educators (FAAE) gives teachers additional liability insurance for their classroom. Some examples of encouraging the student teacher to maintain active memberships in professional organizations are (1) talking to the student teacher about the organizations they can join and the benefits; (2) inviting them to attend organizational events with you; and (3) directly stressing the importance of joining and maintaining their membership throughout their early, mid, and late career stages.

Discuss strategies for effectively managing time, priorities/projects, and email.

Effectively managing time, priorities/projects, and email is a crucial skill teachers must quickly master. As a School-Based Agricultural Education (SBAE) teacher, there are many priorities/projects that must be accomplished outside of their normal teaching load (i.e., maintaining laboratory spaces, managing students' Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE), managing all FFA-related items, and meeting deadline requirements for paperwork needed for trips). Some examples of discussing strategies for effectively managing time, priorities/projects, and email are (1) showing the student teacher the emails that come in daily and explaining how those are managed throughout the day; (2) explaining to them how the calendar is maintained to organize projects (including what could be improved upon), SAEs, and the local FFA Chapter; and (3) giving them examples of how students can be utilized to help offset some of the workload (i.e., student job lists or student managers for laboratory areas).

Professional support from cooperating teachers that should be provided to student teachers includes using observational data as the basis for feedback sessions, encouraging the student teacher to take the lead in evaluating their teaching, introducing the student teacher to the school community, helping the student teacher

develop positive views of teaching, sharing approaches for effectively managing the administrative aspects of teaching, encouraging the student teacher to maintain active memberships in professional organizations, and discussing strategies for effectively managing time, priorities/projects, and email. When student teachers feel supported professionally, they are more likely to have a positive internship experience and remain in the profession (Edgar et al, 2011; Kasperbauer & Roberts, 2007; Roberts, 2006; Rocca, 2005). For additional information related to professional support, explore www.UFCooperatingTeachersSupport.com.

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Appendix A: Best Practices for Mentoring: Cooperating Teacher Series

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #1: Supporting Cooperating Teachers

An overview of the role of cooperating teachers as mentors for student teachers during their capstone experience. This publication is intended for SBAE cooperating teachers and those who support cooperating teachers in their role as mentors.

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #2: Social Support

An overview of the best practices for mentoring with a focus on social support is provided, utilizing specific practices for school-based agricultural education programs.

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #3: Professional Support

An overview of the best practices for mentoring with a focus on professional support is provided, utilizing specific practices for school-based agricultural education programs.

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #4: Role Modeling

An overview of the best practices for mentoring with a focus on role modeling is provided, utilizing specific practices for school-based agricultural education programs.

Cooperating Teachers' Best Practices for Mentoring #5: Implementation and Adoption of a Cooperating Teacher Support Program

An overview for school-based agricultural education (SBAE) program coordinators on how to implement or enhance a research-based cooperating teacher preparation and support program for mentoring student teachers.

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