



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education

TCH LRN 317
Initial Practicum Experience

Handbook & Syllabus
A Guide for Teacher Candidates



The College of Education contributes to the theory and practice of the broad field of education and dedicates itself to understanding and respecting learners in diverse cultural contexts. We facilitate engaged learning and ethical leadership in schools and clinical settings. We seek collaboration with diverse constituencies, recognizing our local and global responsibilities to communities, environments, and future generations.

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Course Description and Purpose

Course Information

Location: 6th – 12th Grade Classroom

Instructor: Lori White

Phone: (509) 335-7984

Office Hours: By appointment

Date and Time: Summer Session

Email Address: whitel@wsu.edu

Office Location: Cleveland

Credit Hours: 2

Prerequisite

TCH LRN 301

Course Description

Classroom experience providing observation, reflection and gradual classroom involvement and teaching responsibility.

The connections between the COE Conceptual Framework and TCH LRN 317 include an emphasis on understanding and respecting learners in the diverse cultural context of a clinical classroom placement.

Instructional Methods

This course relies heavily on field experience, observation, and reflection.

Required Materials

TCH LRN 317 Handbook & Syllabus

University Syllabus

Students are responsible for reading and understanding all university-wide policies and resources pertaining to all courses (for instance: accommodations, care resources, and policies on discrimination or harassment), which can be found in the [University Syllabus](#).

Field Experience

School Assignment

Teacher candidates are required to initiate a volunteer placement and complete three weeks of volunteer hours at a school of their choice. Teacher candidates must complete volunteer hours outside of Whitman and Asotin County unless otherwise permitted by the Office of Field Services and Certification.

Required Hours

Teacher candidates are required to log a minimum of three weeks, full-time, in a 6 – 12 grade classroom during the duration of the course. You should anticipate spending at least 7.5 hours per day in the classroom.

Mentor Teacher

Washington State University relies on the assistance and support of professionals in the field to ensure our teacher candidates are well-prepared for their future students.

Termination of Field Experience

The College of Education reserves the right to refuse the placement of any student in a field experience or to terminate individual placement if there is a cause for concern about that individual's fitness to work with children in a classroom setting.

Absences

Teacher candidates are expected to be present in their scheduled volunteer hours. In the case of an emergency, illness, or accident, teacher candidates are responsible for notifying their mentor teacher if they will be absent or late. **Absences will be made up to the satisfaction of all involved.**

Weather Conditions

The schools prefer that you be resourceful (rather than calling the schools directly) in acquiring information about school closures due to adverse weather conditions.

Transportation

Teacher candidates are responsible for transportation to and from the field experience site. Teacher candidates need to be accountable and on time.

Volunteer Forms

Teacher candidates are responsible for applying to and satisfying all requirements for volunteering with participating school districts.

Sign-in

Teacher candidates must sign in as visitors to the school office each week when entering and leaving the building. The administration must be aware of who is in the building.

Liability Insurance

Proof of liability insurance must be on file before beginning and throughout any field experience. Liability insurance may be purchased online at <https://education.wsu.edu/liabilityinsurance/>.

School Handbook

Teacher candidates must read the placement school handbook and follow the school policies and procedures while in the building.

Teaching & Learning Expectations

Attendance

This course meets the requirements for state-legislated certification; therefore, students should make all reasonable efforts to attend volunteer hours. However, in the event a student is unable to attend, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor AND mentor teacher as soon as possible, explain the reason for the absence (and provide documentation, if appropriate), and make up class work missed within a reasonable amount of time if allowed. **Attendance is documented. Missing volunteer hours may result in failure of the class.**

Professional Dispositions

The Department of Teaching and Learning at Washington State University uses the Professional Dispositions for Academic Progress (PDAP) to evaluate the dispositions of all its teacher candidates in the classroom and the field. Your professional disposition will be assessed throughout the course. For more information on professional dispositions, visit <https://education.wsu.edu/professionaldisposition/>.

Professional Communication

The faculty members, instructors, and teaching assistants in the Elementary Education program emphasize the importance of effective written and oral communication for teachers. Students of the program are expected to demonstrate that they can meet professional communication standards on all their assignments. A student who fails to adhere to conventions of writing (e.g., makes consistent grammatical and spelling errors, frequently misuses words or phrases, fails to organize writing effectively) may be required to work with the WSU Writing Center or complete additional coursework. Students who fail to meet expectations after being provided the opportunity for remediation and improvement may be removed from the program. Students will also be held accountable for demonstrating that they are capable of clear and professional verbal communication.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Candidates

The practicum provides you with an important opportunity to begin your professional development. Students enrolled in WSU's teacher preparation program are expected to behave responsibly and professionally. The following guidelines address some of the competencies for which you will be held accountable:

Be Prompt and Present

You are expected to be present and on time for your volunteer assignment. Teachers are on tight schedules to meet the demands of a school day. Teachers plan on your presence in the classroom and expect you to be a consistent part of student learning.

Demonstrate Professionalism

Know and adhere to the school and classroom policies and procedures. **Dress like a professional.** Please do not wear jeans, low-riding pants, midriff tops, sweats, or short skirts or shorts. Do not display studs, body piercings, or tattoos. Appearances that are a distraction or serve as a poor model for children are not acceptable. You could be asked to leave the practicum if not dressed appropriately and be required to make up the time on a different day.

Be Respectful

Show effort, enthusiasm, and respect for the teaching profession and the professionals you work with. It is not your place to confront or question the teacher's judgment, teaching style, or choice of activities. A respectful attitude, an eagerness to learn, and an appreciation for this opportunity will go a long way in creating a professional relationship between you and your mentor teacher.

Show Initiative

You will be expected to observe the students and your mentor teacher, take the initiative in working with students individually or in small groups, engage in classroom activities and lessons, be available to assist the students from the classroom to other learning situations (computer lab, specialists, assemblies, library), and to collaborate with your mentor teacher to complete assignments for this course.

Be Reflective

You are expected to reflect on your experiences in this field experience and to make connections to the topics discussed in your methods courses. This is an opportunity for you to analyze and interpret the impact that this experience is having on you as a beginning teacher and the impact you are having on the other professionals and the students with whom you work.

Learning Outcomes and Assignments

Learning Outcomes

1. Observe and apply educational theories and approaches during volunteer experiences.
2. Attend to the social and emotional development of students during volunteer experiences.
3. Demonstrate professional dispositions of educators during volunteer experiences.
4. Work respectfully and collaboratively with colleagues and the community to ensure quality instruction for 6 – 12 grade students.

Course Assignments

1. Provide the Mentor Welcome Letter to your mentor teacher (Appendix A).
2. Use the Suggested Classroom Activities as a guide during the practicum (Appendix B).
3. Follow the Professional Guidelines at all times (Appendix C).
4. Complete and submit the TCH LRN 317 Reflection (Appendix D).
5. Complete and submit the TCH LRN 317 Journal (Appendix E).
6. Provide your mentor teacher a [link](#) to the TCH LRN 317 Experience Evaluation.

Academic Integrity Policy

You are responsible for reading WSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), which is based on [Washington State Law](#). If you cheat in your work in this class, you will:

- **Fail the course.**
- Be reported to the [Center for Community Standards](#).
- Have the right to appeal the decision.
- Not be able to drop the course or withdraw from the course until the **appeals** process is finished.

Ask the instructor if you have questions about what you can and cannot do in this course. If you want to ask for a change in the decision about academic integrity, use the [form](#) at the [Center for Community Standards](#) website. You must submit this request within 21 calendar days of the decision.

Course Evaluation

Grades are assigned on a satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (F) basis.

Evaluation TCH LRN 317 is an essential component of the experience. Evaluation will be on a satisfactory/fail basis. Satisfactory performance will permit students to continue to the next phase in the teacher training program.

Course Evaluation

Supplementary assignments and tasks have been provided in this handbook.

Evaluation

Since this volunteer experience is a university requirement, the final evaluation of the teacher candidate is the responsibility of university personnel. However, school personnel (teachers and principals) will have the greatest contact and experience with teacher candidates in the classroom, so we will rely heavily on their assessment.

Evaluations will be based on the following dispositions:

Professionalism

1. The teacher candidate is punctual.
2. The teacher candidate maintains a professional demeanor, behavior, and attire.
3. The teacher candidate maintains social contact with students consistent with a professional role.

Interaction with students

1. The teacher candidate relates positively to students, demonstrating interest, respect, equity, care, and good rapport.
2. The teacher candidate engages students in classroom activities and lessons.
3. The teacher candidate's interactions with students are appropriate.

Responsibility

1. The teacher candidate comes to class prepared to assist the mentor teacher in daily tasks.
2. The teacher candidate regularly attends for three weeks on time and as scheduled.
3. The teacher candidate makes necessary arrangements to make up absences.

Initiative

1. The teacher candidate displays a positive attitude and enthusiasm.
2. The teacher candidate shows initiative in the classroom (seeks information, asks questions, contributes ideas, helps where needed, etc.).
3. The teacher candidate is self-motivated.
4. The teacher candidate displays a willingness to learn from the mentor teacher.
5. The teacher candidate responds positively to constructive comments made by mentors.

Appendix A: Mentor Welcome Letter

Dear Mentor Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to work with a WSU teacher candidate in your classroom! As part of our TCH LRN 317 Initial Practicum course, we require teacher candidates to spend three weeks in 6 - 12 classrooms learning directly from teachers and students. All teacher candidates have had previous experience with children, a minimum of one teacher education course, and have been provided with an orientation to working in schools, including a review of professional guidelines.

Teacher candidates in this course are just beginning their professional preparation, and we rely on your judgment to determine the extent of their involvement in instructional activities. We ask that students not be asked to substitute for the teacher or be left on their own. It is most beneficial to students if they can participate in a variety of activities, including:

- Doing introductory tasks such as taking role, collecting papers, and assisting individual students
- Assisting with small group instruction and whole class lessons
- Assisting in the preparation of instructional materials
- Grading, record keeping, or organizational tasks
- Working with students from diverse backgrounds with varied learning needs
- Participating in extra-curricular activities, parent-teacher meetings, school-community events
- Participating in professional opportunities such as in-service and faculty meetings

We have found that successful practicum experiences also depend on daily communication between the mentor teacher and teacher candidate to clarify roles and responsibilities, discuss student needs, and provide positive feedback and suggestions. It's especially valuable to include teacher candidates in discussions that blend teaching theory and practice. While you know what you are doing and why, the teacher candidate does not. It is helpful if you discuss your teaching philosophy, explain your classroom management system, describe how you develop teaching materials and lessons, and show how you adjust instruction to meet individual student needs.

At the end of the three-week volunteer experience, your teacher candidate will provide you with the [link](#) to an evaluation form to help us evaluate your teacher candidate's potential as a future educator. We recognize that teacher time is limited and precious. We also know that without your assistance, our teacher candidates would not be able to bring the perspective of real classroom experiences into their coursework at WSU. We appreciate your willingness to share your experience and expertise. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact the faculty listed below.

Sincerely,

Lori White
whitel@wsu.edu
(509) 335-7984

Appendix B: Suggested Classroom Activities

The following is a list of suggested activities you might do during your practicum experience.

Beginning Activities

- Share your appreciation by thanking the mentor teacher for inviting you into their classroom.
- Introduce yourself to the whole class. Tell a bit about your studies, your interests/hobbies, and why you would like to be a teacher.
- Ask questions! Before or after class, discuss with your mentor teacher their philosophy of teaching, their teaching style, their management techniques, and their handling of particular students and situations.
- Take roll and record attendance. Learn student names.
- Initiate assistance to the mentor teacher. Help prepare classroom materials, photocopy and staple handouts, and set up an activity or lab. Hand back papers and collect assignments.
- If permitted, record grades and/or correct papers. Discuss with your mentor teacher his/her grading procedure.
- Make a visual aid (bulletin board, poster, advanced organizer, overhead, worksheet) appropriate to the topics being studied.

Working with Individual Students or Small Groups

- Go over directions with students to help them get started on assignments.
- If permitted, assist students with assignments or go over corrected assignments with students.
- Reteach a concept to a student who is struggling with an assignment.
- Quiz students orally on information to be learned or to study for a test.
- Help generate topics for research, find resources, and organize ideas for projects and reports.
- Act as editor and read a student's rough draft making suggestions.
- Work with a student who has special learning needs or who struggles with learning. Think of new ways to present concepts to them using concrete examples.
- Work with a student who seems unmotivated or detached. Try to find out what his/her interests and needs are and work with him/her from that standpoint.
- Build relationships with students. What did you learn about their interests and needs? Their hopes and dreams? Their worries and concerns? Their social and emotional needs?

Observe and Practice

- Watch your mentor teacher teach a lesson.
- If permitted, co-teach a lesson with your teacher where each of you presents a part of the lesson.
- Observe what your mentor teacher does to create community within the classroom.
- Use your journal to take notes (outside of class time) on each of the dispositions of effective teachers.
- Take notes of ideas for the future! Focus on the classroom environment, instructional practices, and methods for meeting the diverse needs of the students.

Appendix C: Professional Guidelines

School districts and their staff are working together to provide the best educational environments for their K-12 students. Principals and mentor teachers view the practicum experiences as your entrance into the profession of teaching. As a practicum student, you need to realize that you are in a real classroom and that, as a participant, your actions should always be professional.

While not everything could possibly be included, the following is a partial list of guidelines that beginning professionals are expected to observe:

- Dress appropriately. Dressing professionally gives students the signal that you, too, are to be respected as a teacher.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Attend school each day during the hours agreed upon by you and your mentor teacher. You may need to come early or stay late on some occasions to assist your teacher.
- If you must be late or absent, call the school and leave a message for your mentor teacher; this should be done with as much advance notice as possible—the teacher may be counting on you to assist that day.

This classroom belongs to your mentor teacher. They may teach or interact in ways that are different than how you would do it. You are a guest of the school. It is up to you to work with the mentor teacher and to support the learning that goes on in the classroom. If you feel that you are being asked to do something that is harmful to students—you may talk to the classroom teacher, the school principal, or a WSU course supervisor.

- Take initiative in the classroom while remaining supportive of student and teacher needs. Let your teacher know what you are comfortable doing and how you would like to help. Involve yourself in the daily activities of the classroom as much as possible.
- Be aware that teachers work hard and may not be able to spend much time with you outside of regular classroom time. However, if you have a concern about a student or your role in the classroom, you should set a specific time to talk to the teacher.
- Communicate daily with your mentor teacher. Ask what needs to be done. If your teacher is busy, think of a way to help individual students with the assignments or choose one of the activities from Appendix B.
- If you are asked to do something you do not feel prepared to do, let your teacher know you need more time or assistance.
- Be open to different perspectives, to suggestions, and to constructive criticism.
- Be responsible—follow through on assigned tasks and actively participate in classroom activities and duties.
- Be sure to take care of yourself—rest, eat well, get exercise, and reserve some time each day for yourself. It is difficult to give your best to others if your own needs are not being met.

- Let your spirit shine—show your joy and enthusiasm for working with youth. You have worked hard to realize your goal of becoming a teacher...make sure that your teaching experience reflects the kind of professional you want to become.

When working with students, there are some definite Do's and Don'ts. Ask your mentor teacher how to best handle any difficult situations that may arise with individual students.

- Be supportive of students while remaining professional.
- Be aware and respectful of the diverse beliefs, values, and perceptions of students from varied families, cultures, and communities.
- Look for and respond to individual differences in student learning styles and needs.
- Check in with individual students to see how they are doing and if they need assistance.
- Give each student a new beginning each day that you work with them.
- Ask your mentor teacher for suggestions if you find it difficult to work with a particular student.
- Talk to students and/or the teacher in private when there is a problem; avoid confrontations in front of the class.
- Immediately report any threat a student makes to harm themselves or another person to your mentor teacher.
- Immediately report any suspected abuse of or by the student to your mentor teacher.
- Do NOT assume that all students should be responsive to you; three weeks will not be enough time to establish a working relationship with all students.
- Do NOT assume that a student who does not begin working right away is lazy; check to see if s/he has understood the assignment or needs help getting started
- Do NOT assume that students don't care; often pretending not to care is a way to save face when work is too confusing or difficult, or the student has no history of success in school; do remain positive and supportive of all students
- Do NOT try to take on or fix a student's personal problems; refer the student to a teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult
- Do NOT share personal information or talk about your personal relationships, problems, or situations.
- Do NOT share social media information or "friend" a student.

These are the circumstances that most frequently arise for future teachers in the 317 practicum and our suggested responses to these situations:

A student shares personal information:

- If you are not comfortable with this, simply say, "It sounds like you might want to talk to someone who can help you with this." Help them think of an adult they might talk to (a school counselor, a teacher or staff person, a coach, their parents, etc.).
- If you are comfortable or feel you need to listen: Listen, then help the student think of an adult they might talk to (school counselor, a teacher or staff person, a coach, parents...)

- Use empathy statements (“I can see you are upset. Let’s get some help so we can figure out what to do about this”) but do not join the student in criticizing himself, his parents or family, his friends, other teachers or staff. Do not promise to fix or solve the problem.
- If the student has harmed or threatens to harm himself or another person, you must report it immediately to the classroom teacher before the student leaves the classroom
- If the student has been harmed or abused in any way, you must also report this immediately to your mentor teacher.

A student asks you about your personal information:

- Remain professional; set a clear boundary between yourself and the student: “That’s a personal question, and I can’t answer it.” Keep it simple, clear, and short.
- Use the professional nature of your relationship as a reason. Do not put the students down or blame them in any way. Hurting or rejecting the student may only encourage him/her to come back at you.
- Document in your journal the date, time, and location of the incident, what the student said, and what your response was.
- Let your supervising teacher know what occurred and how you responded.

Working with students Who Are Unmotivated or “Just Don’t Seem to Care”:

- One of the most important things is to talk to the student one-on-one. If you take an accusatory tone (“You are wasting my time and yours”), the student will shut you out. You need to approach the student as a supportive mentor (“Is there anything I can do to support you?”)
- If the student is still non-responsive, do not take it personally. Leaving them with a supportive feeling is the most important thing you can do.

Appendix D: TCH LRN 317 Reflection

2 pages double spaced

Finished product that demonstrates your ability to write well

Topic ideas, but not limited to:

Now that you have been in a classroom for three weeks, how do you feel about teaching?

What about this experience inspired or discouraged you?

What did you learn about yourself through this experience?

What strengths do you bring to the teacher education program and to the teaching profession?

Appendix E: TCH LRN 317 Journal

Teacher Candidate: _____ Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

Mentor Teacher: _____ Grade: _____ Building: _____

Professional Dispositions

Professional Disposition Evaluation for Field Experiences (PDEFE) standards are used as field experience success criteria. Standards are adapted from the Teacher Performance Evaluation Program (TPEP) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC).

Instructions: Teacher candidates observe and reflect on the following dispositions during the practicum experience. Teacher candidates DO NOT fill out the journal while in the field. Teacher candidates are expected to be fully present during field experiences. Due to the limited extent of the field experience, teacher candidates may not observe every disposition. For each disposition not observed, please define the disposition, and provide an example of how you might meet the standard during your student teaching experience.

| DISPOSITION STANDARD | OBSERVATION NOTES/EVIDENCE |
|--|---|
| <p>1. High Expectations/Understanding for Diverse Cultures A) Observed mentor respecting gender, ethnic, and cultural differences. B) Observed or practiced lesson activities that progressed students to high levels of achievement. C) Observed mentor communicate learning standards in student-friendly language. D) Observed mentor setting clear expectations for the learning environment.</p> | <p>A) B) C) D)</p> |
| <p>2. Differentiation A) Observed mentor provide methods and tools to accommodate all students. B) Observed mentor deliver learning experiences that address individual and whole class needs.</p> | <p>A) B)</p> |

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| <p>3. Instructional Strategies A) Observed mentor use a variety of learning strategies to engage students in learning. B) Observed mentor helping students make connections and asking students questions that require critical thinking. C) Observed mentor identifying which students need additional support or acceleration during learning experiences.</p> | <p>A) B) C)</p> |
| <p>4. Assessment A) Observed mentor checking for understanding throughout lessons and modifying instruction to improve student learning. B) Observed mentor checking for understanding using student voice to encourage students to monitor their own progress.</p> | <p>A) B)</p> |
| <p>5. Classroom Environment A) Observed mentor’s positive rapport with students. B) Observed mentor implement strategies, routines, transitions, and procedures to encourage positive learning behaviors. C) Observed mentor fostering an environment that considers the cultural, physical, social-emotional, and intellectual well-being of students.</p> | <p>A) B) C)</p> |
| <p>6. Communication & Collaboration A) Observed or asked mentor about their communication and collaboration with colleagues and administration to promote student learning and growth.</p> | <p>A)</p> |
| <p>7. Taking Initiative to Participate and Collaborate A) Observed or asked mentor about their participation in activities outside of the classroom.</p> | <p>A)</p> |
| <p>8. Requests Feedback A) Asked mentor teacher for suggestions for improvement.</p> | <p>A)</p> |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 9. Reflection A) Asked mentor teacher questions (at appropriate times) about successful lessons, strategies, and practices. | A) |
| 10. Professionalism A) Attended and arrived on time for all assigned practicum experiences. B) Demonstrated a professional demeanor, behavior, and attire. C) Demonstrated professional communication with students, families, and staff. | A) B) C) |

Standards adapted from the Teacher Performance Evaluation Program (TPEP) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC).

Mark all population groups you worked with during your program:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Subcontinent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native American or Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White/non-Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Needs Learner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Multilingual Learner |

1. Briefly describe your experiences working with the students marked above (small group instruction, large instruction, observations, etc.).

2. How might your identity, thinking, values, and understanding of the world shape your interactions with students and families whose identities may differ from your own?

3. Describe an instance or event when you observed your mentor teacher or placement school actively working on learning or gaining insights regarding student diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender identity, culture, language) to better meet the needs of the student populations listed above.

If you did not observe this due to the brief nature of the experience, describe what you will do in the future to gain a deeper understanding of your students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and family traditions.

Directions

1. Teacher candidate completes and signs the TCH LRN 317 journal.
2. Teacher candidate scans the document with signatures into a single pdf.
3. Teacher candidate names the file: lastname.firstname.317
4. Teacher candidate submits a copy to TCH LRN 317 Canvas course.

Teacher Candidate _____
Signature