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**A GUIDEBOOK FOR MENTOR TEACHERS**

**OF**

**CI 495A STUDENTS**

(EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT CI 495A BUT DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO ASK.)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER TO THE MENTORS .....	3
CONTACT INFORMATION .....	4
WHAT IS PENN STATE’S TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM ALL ABOUT? .....	5
WHAT IS THIS “DI BLOCK” THAT MY STUDENT TALKS ABOUT? .....	5
WHAT IS CI 495A? .....	5
SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE .....	6
WHAT DOES MY STUDENT HAVE TO DO FOR CI 495A?.....	6
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OBSERVING MY STUDENT?.....	7
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CONFERENCING WITH MY STUDENT? .....	7
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVALUATING MY STUDENT? .....	7
HOW DO I CONTACT SOMEONE IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?.....	8
CLOSING NOTE.....	8

Dear Mentor Teachers,

Thank you for agreeing to introduce a Penn State education student to the real world of teaching. We understand the important role you play in helping the students become the very best teachers they can be, and your help is much appreciated! The CI 495A supervisors also play an important, but different, role in this development. You are the ones who are with the pre-service teacher every day they are in the classroom. You are the ones they look to for daily guidance and help with concerns they may have. The supervisors will teach or review important material with the students in seminars and observe and conference with the students, but they cannot be there as frequently as you are. Establishing collaborative relationships among the three of you – the student, the supervisor and you as mentor – benefits all involved.

The goal of this packet is to give you some insight into the semester that the students are experiencing and some understanding of the Penn State program. While the students are in the classrooms every Tuesday and Thursday, they are also attending three methods classes – math ed, science ed and social studies ed. This is typically a very busy, sometimes stressful, semester for the students as they switch back and forth several times a week between the roles of teacher and student, completing a number of assignments in each role. Each of these assignments is explained in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Because our goal is to have you work closely with us to help our students become effective teachers, we value your input and suggestions. Please call or email us if you have concerns, ideas for improvement, or questions. The following page lists the phone numbers and email addresses of the Penn State CI 495A supervisors as well as those of us in the office. I welcome your visits to my office, and in return, value being invited into your classrooms as well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alicia M. McDyre

Director of Curriculum & Instruction Field Experiences

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## **WHAT IS PENN STATE’S TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM ALL ABOUT?**

The framework for Penn State’s elementary teacher education program is built on a model of teaching as reflective inquiry. Teachers make decisions about life in classrooms to help students develop as active, knowledgeable citizens of a multicultural world. These decisions are based on teachers’ understandings of self and prior experiences; their students; human development and diversity; subject matter; educational theory; curricular design; instructional methods; federal, state and institutional regulations; and political, social and moral relationships among education, community and world affairs. Teachers develop their understandings continually through systematic intensive inquiry by posing questions, gathering data from educational literature and their classrooms, analyzing classroom products, participating in observations and discussions, probing the historical conditions that produced the present circumstances and taking action on this knowledge.

Critically reflecting on and taking action on one’s daily work is the hallmark of a professional engaged in self-improvement. As reflective inquirers, prospective teachers bring personal, social and theoretical knowledge to bear to promote curriculum change and school improvement. We encourage our prospective teachers to be inquirers into teaching and learning practices and developmental processes encountered in classrooms, especially during field experiences.

## **WHAT IS THE DI BLOCK THAT MY 495A STUDENT TALKS ABOUT?**

The Discipline Inquiry (DI) block is a 12-credit block that includes courses in teaching math, science and social studies, as well as the 495A field experience. First-semester seniors usually take this block. Students are grouped into cohorts of approximately 25 students for the methods courses and smaller cohorts for 495A. Placing the students in cohorts encourages peer collaboration and support. In some cases, lessons may be planned in the university setting (MathEd 420, SciEd 458 and SS Ed 430 W) and implemented in the classroom (495A). Every Tuesday, students have a seminar to review lesson planning, teaching strategies and classroom management, as well as the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and observing in the classroom.

## **WHAT IS CI 495A?**

CI 495A is the pre-student teaching field experience. CI 495A is the first time that many students have been in front of a classroom of students as they begin to teach lessons. In this experience, the students’ focus will be on lesson design, teaching and classroom management, as well as examining issues associated with educating diverse learners.

## HOW DO THE STUDENTS' CLASSES AND FIELD EXPERIENCE FIT TOGETHER?

### SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE

<b>Monday</b> <b>DI Block</b> <b>classes</b>	<b>Tuesday</b> <b>CI 495A</b>	<b>Wednesday</b> <b>DI Block</b> <b>classes</b>	<b>Thursday</b> <b>CI 495A</b>	<b>Friday</b> <b>Other courses</b>
Math Ed Science	In the schools	Math Ed	In the schools	
Social Studies Ed	In the schools	Social Studies Ed	In the schools	
	Seminar		Seminar	

## WHAT DOES MY 495A STUDENT HAVE TO DO FOR THE CI 495A EXPERIENCE?

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS?

The 495 students are required to plan, teach and reflect upon a **minimum** of ten lessons. Three of these plans will be science plans, one will be the social studies lesson, and the rest may be any subject area. The students must have their plans approved by the mentor teacher at least 24 hours in advance of their teaching. **If the student has not submitted the plan for your approval, please do not permit the student to teach.** A lesson may be for an individual, small group or an entire class. We also encourage co-teaching with your student, especially in the beginning. The following suggestions may help you guide your 495A student toward becoming a professional:

1. Provide a supportive environment in which a beginning teacher can learn. You may find yourself in a situation (much like you encounter with a young child learning to make his bed) in which you could do the job better and/or faster yourself. Please try to be patient – learning takes time.
2. Provide helpful, specific feedback. It is useful to think of yourself in the role of a coach, making suggestions that will help the student improve his/her performance, just as an Olympic coach would offer suggestions to an athlete.
3. Take time to listen carefully to your beginning teacher. Many students are anxious at the beginning and need you to listen to them, which they interpret as caring about them.
4. Don't be afraid to address your concerns with your students. They would rather hear from you that something they are doing is upsetting you early in the experience rather than at the end of the experience.

5. Be tactfully honest with the student. Telling a student, “that was a pretty good lesson” when in fact it was not very good doesn’t help the student to learn to identify his/her strengths and goal areas.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OBSERVING MY 495A STUDENT?**

Observing means describing what was heard or seen. Specific comments such as “I saw five students sharpening their pencils while you were speaking,” is easier for a student to remedy than a more general evaluative comment such as “Your classroom management needs work.” In general, the more specific you can be, the better – rather than “Nice job,” a comment such as, “You did a nice job bringing the student back on task by standing next to his desk,” provides the student with feedback he/she can use for growth.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CONFERENCING WITH MY 495A STUDENT?**

The main objective of a conference is to provide an opportunity for the students to analyze and reflect on their teaching. Some of the students will be very good at looking at a lesson and making judgments about their teaching. Others may need probing questions or more directive suggestions. At the end of the conference, we want the students to be in a better position to solve their own problems and improve their teaching effectiveness.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVALUATING MY 495A STUDENT?**

As mentioned earlier, it is good to remember that these students are just beginning their teaching careers. Teaching is difficult, and more difficult for some students than others. In this initial step toward becoming a teacher, the 495A students will have opportunities to demonstrate growth. A three-way, midterm conference helps to assess the student’s strengths and determine goals for improvement the remainder of the semester.

The students are graded on a pass/fail basis, with the grade based on classroom performance, written assignments and professional attributes. The student’s grade depends primarily on the professional judgment of the University supervisor, in consultation with you, the mentor teacher. As part of the final evaluation, you will be asked to complete the assessment form included in this packet.

### **WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE A QUESTION OR CONCERN?**

The easiest person to contact is probably the supervisor who is observing and conferencing in your classroom. However, there may be times when you need more clarification in order to help your student plan or implement a lesson or that you may have a question or concern that the

supervisor isn't able to answer. In any case, please feel free to contact us in the field experience office at 814-863-4469. Dr. Alicia McDyre is the Director of Field Experiences and the Coordinator of PK-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Experiences.

### **CLOSING NOTE**

We hope that you have found this information as helpful as we have intended. Again, we do appreciate you opening your classroom to a beginning teacher. The students always report that they find time in the classroom to be the most valuable part of their teacher education experience.