
A GUIDEBOOK FOR MENTOR TEACHERS

OF

CI 495B STUDENTS

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

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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 495B 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 495B 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 II BLOCK THAT MY 495B STUDENT TALKS ABOUT?

The Integrated Inquiry (II) block is a 15-credit block that includes courses in teaching math, science, social studies, classroom learning environments, as well as the 495B field experience. First-semester seniors usually take this block. This year, the ML cohort has 24 students taking these courses together. In some cases, lessons may be planned in the university setting (MathEd, SciEd and SS Ed) and implemented in the classroom (495B). Every Tuesday, students have a seminar to review reflect on what they are doing and observing in the classroom.

WHAT IS CI 495B?

CI 495B is the pre-student teaching field experience. CI 495B is the first time that many students have been in front of a whole 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?

STUDENT SCHEDULE

Monday CI 495B	Tuesday CI 495A	Wednesday II Block classes	Thursday	Friday II Block classes
In the schools	In the schools	Classroom Learning Environments	Work Day	SciEd
In the schools	In the schools			MathEd
	Seminar			SSEd

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

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS?

The 495 students are required to plan, teach and reflect upon a **minimum** of five lessons. One of these will be a lesson you would have planned to teach, one will be using scientific skills or thinking (but for any subject), and the others can be of a subject of your student's choosing. 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 495B 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 495B 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 495B 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 495B 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 495B 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 evaluation 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 that can be found in your Google folder.

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-8th 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.