

TEACHER CANDIDATE'S

Guide to Field Placements

Elementary (PreK-4), Secondary (7-12) and Dual (General Ed & Special Ed) Certifications

Lehigh’s PDE teacher-preparation programs require that teacher candidates complete a wide range of course-based field experiences in specified settings, across four different stages, distributed over the entire program of study. The Office of Professional Certification (OPC) is responsible for helping teacher candidates obtain these field placements.

This guide describes the types of field experiences attached to courses and explains how teacher candidates obtain, complete and document these placements.

We have organized this guide by questions with each question addressed in a separate section.

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What Are the Four Stages of Field Experiences?

PDE has identified four stages of field experiences. See Table 1.

TABLE 1. PDE Stages of Field Experience

Stage	Description
1	Observation. Teacher candidates observe in a variety of education and education-related settings including community-based childcare, Head Start, early intervention and school districts. Observations should occur in a range of school and early learning settings (e.g., urban, suburban, rural; high and low-performing schools), so teacher candidates have a broad experience and learn as much as possible about pre-K through grade 4 learners and pre-K through grade 4 education philosophy.
2	Initial Experience [interaction/exploration]. The candidate works under the teacher's supervision during individual tutorials or with a small group of students. Activities can include reading, math, and other subject-matter experiences, tutoring children, small-group conversations, outdoor play and monitoring classroom routines and procedures. [40 hours required for Observation and Exploration (Stages 1 & 2).]
3	Pre-student Teaching. This is the beginning of actual teaching experience in which candidates teach small groups of students in schools and early learning settings. This combines individual tutorials, small-group, and whole-class instruction at the selected grade level over the course of the semester. Candidates work with materials they have prepared and created for classroom instruction. [150 hours required for Stage 3.]
4	Student Teaching. A minimum of 12 weeks full-time student teaching as prescribed in §354.25(f).

How Are Field Experiences Tied to Courses?

Each instructor designs a series of appropriate course-based field experiences that expose teacher candidates to experiences in schools and other settings that enhance their understanding of family and cultural issues, RtII, standards-aligned instruction, inclusive practices and differentiated instruction. Field experiences embedded in courses throughout the curriculum allow candidates to reinforce what they are learning in their coursework through observation, data collection, one-on-one tutoring or teaching, small-group work and whole-class teaching.

Stage 1 and 2 field experiences are designed to get candidates thinking about what they are learning and how it relates to current practices in the field. Because Stage 1 and 2 are embedded as part of candidates' coursework, assessments of these activities are done in courses. Each instructor works with his/her teacher candidates to help them see how what they observe in the field compares with the research-based best practices taught in the course. The purpose of Stage 3 field experiences is to give teachers-in-training a chance to try out these research-based best practices. Our goal is to have our teacher candidates identify areas of confusion or issues of actual use in the schools and to discuss with their course instructors and university supervisors ways in which to refine and enhance their teaching skills. Candidates discuss with course instructors and supervisors what they are experiencing and those instructors and supervisors then mentor candidates in ways to enhance their skills and overcome barriers they have encountered.

How Many Hours of Field Experience at Each Stage Are Required in Each Course?

Table 2 (p. 7) details the distribution of field experiences across our PK-4 general education and dual elementary (PK-4 general education plus PK-12 special education) programs, while Table 3 (p. 8) provides that distribution for our 7-12 general education and dual Special Ed. PK-12.

Can Instructors Change the Number of Hours of Field Experience Required for Their Courses?

A course instructor can decide that he or she would like teacher candidates to have more hours of field experience in any/all of the Stages; those hours are **in addition to** those listed in Table 2.

Your course instructor will make you aware of any additional field experiences requirements and/or possibilities.

Can my fieldwork hours count for more than one course?

NO! Required fieldwork hours for each course are separate. For example, if you are enrolled in two courses that both require 10 hours of fieldwork, together this means you must complete 20 hours of fieldwork

Clearances Required for Placements

Candidates must have all current clearances on file in the OPC to receive any placement. You will not receive any contact information if any clearance is missing or expired. The departmental policy on clearances is posted at [this page](#).

Which Teacher Candidates Need Field Placements?

All students in courses with field experiences - including teacher candidates, non-certification and non-degree students - are **required** to complete the field experiences listed on the previous pages for all courses in their program of study.

Non-degree Students and Choosing the Correct Placement Opportunity

If you are currently a non-degree student, but you intend to seek teacher certification at either elementary or secondary level, it is crucial that your field experience take place at the proper level and age / grade-band for that certification. If your experience does not match your certification, your field experience will not count, and you will be required to redo this experience at the proper age/grade level before you can apply for certification.

How Do Teacher Candidates Obtain Field Placements?

Once the OPC has lined up the necessary placements, candidates will be notified via an OPC e-mail. Depending on the course and the number of placements available, teacher candidates may be notified to sign up in the OPC, or they may simply receive their assignment through e-mail.

Sometimes, various opportunities will exist for a particular course. In those cases, teacher candidates will be notified to visit the OPC to sign up for a placement. Those will be first-come, first-served opportunities.

Teacher candidates will receive the relevant contact information for each site. Often, the OPC works with building principals or central administration personnel for the placements. Be sure to follow whatever directions are provided to make your placement arrangements.

The OPC will line up enough placement opportunities to allow all candidates in the course to complete required field experiences, but candidates are responsible for completing their field experiences in a timely fashion. It is not wise to wait until the end of the semester to try to complete field experiences. Inclement weather and various schedule changes can close a site or mean the site decides not to allow visitors on the day you had hoped to come. In addition, there may be a number of you at a particular site; planning ahead and scheduling early in the semester will alleviate frustration for you and the schools.

Can Candidates Locate Their Own Field Placements?

In general, teacher candidates should not line up their own field placements. Our success in securing placements across the Valley is dependent upon the relationships the OPC is creating with local districts. There are many teacher-preparation institutions around us, and we are all competing to place candidates in the limited available settings. Lehigh is a small player compared to some of our competitors, so we are attempting to reduce the confusion and frustration that often occur on both sides of the process by streamlining placements through the OPC.

There may, however, be instances in which a candidate works in a setting in which he or she can complete a field experience or instances in which a teacher candidate lives in a distant in-state community and could complete the experience at a familiar site that is willing to host the candidate for field work. Examples of such sites might include the candidate's former school or a site where one of the candidate's family members works.

In these cases, your course instructor can approve such a placement, provided that the instructor confirms that the site meets both PDE and course requirements. Candidates should request instructor approval in writing (email) indicating the school, mentor name, grade level and building administrator. Additionally, if a specific setting or student population is required for the course, the candidate should outline how the placement meets the field placement criteria. After approving such placements, course instructors should send an email to the OPC Placement Coordinator. The approval and reason, plus the details of the placement, are important information for the OPC to retain for its records for our subsequent PDE full-program review.

The OPC Placement Coordinator must have instructor approvals for such placements by the end of the third week of classes. If necessary, OPC Placement Coordinator will confirm the placement with the site and relay any relevant information to the candidate.

What Do Candidates Need to Do Once They Have Obtained Their Placements?

Each candidate will receive contact information for his or her placement. You are then responsible for contacting the person listed and making arrangements to complete the field experience. You must comply with any restrictions the placement site has made; please do **not** attempt to persuade them to change these restrictions.

If, after making these arrangements, you discover that you are unable to make it to the placement site as scheduled, you need to contact the placement site and let them know you cannot make it and reschedule a visit on another date and time that is acceptable to them. If, while at the site, you realize that the setting does not fit your course requirements, let the OPC Placement Coordinator know as soon as possible, so another placement can be found.

How Do Teacher Candidates Who Hold Full-time Jobs Complete Field Experiences?

Clearly, most field experiences need to occur in school settings, particularly those at the Stage 3 level. This can create difficulties for teacher candidates who hold full-time jobs and are not readily available during school hours. Our goal is to accommodate these candidates as much as we can, but this also will require flexibility from the candidate. That is, the candidate may need to work with his or her employer to get permission to come in (and stay) a little later some days, to come in earlier and then leave a little earlier some days, or to take an earlier or later lunch hour in order to spend time in the schools. The candidate's ability to use flex or vacation time greatly expands our options for field placements. But even this may not be enough to allow candidates with full-time jobs to keep up with the required field experiences.

For this reason, consideration will be given to alternative placement sites that might allow candidates with full-time jobs to complete field experiences in the evenings or on weekends. This calls for great creativity. Qualifying alternative placement sites might include nature centers, science museums and discovery centers, historic sites, weekend programs for elementary or secondary students, online teaching or homework help, working with cyber-schools and other technology-facilitated interactions with learners. In these cases, PDE's directives require students to create a proposal that the teacher-education programs would consider for approval.

The key issue here is that alternative placements sites must offer the candidate the opportunity to complete PDE competencies at the correct Stage with learners of the type and age that match the intent of the field experience and the candidate's certification. This means a candidate pursuing PK-4 certification cannot complete his or her field experience with secondary (seventh – 12th grade) students or in a teenage setting, nor can a candidate pursuing secondary certification complete his field experience with children younger than seventh grade. Similarly, if a field experience is intended to expose the candidate to inclusive situations, that experience must occur in a situation where there is such inclusion. If you need an alternative placement, it is your responsibility to get approval from the course instructor and then inform the OPC.

Your Responsibilities During the Placement

Recognizing that you represent Lehigh University and that you are a guest being welcomed into a school community, it is important to realize that sometimes the fit is natural and easy. Sometimes, it requires adjustments as you discover how to mesh what you've learned at Lehigh to the culture of the individual school. The goal is to have the best experience possible. When there is a conflict of cultures or when candidates experience difficulties, it is usually because of the following:

- Teacher candidates become unreliable in showing up when scheduled;
- Candidates show up later than or depart earlier from their scheduled time;
- Candidates misunderstand what constitutes professional attire;
- Candidates fail to prepare well;
- In their enthusiasm to demonstrate what they have learned at Lehigh, candidates can be too critical in their comments about what they see in schools;
- Candidates become defensive and/or unreceptive to constructive feedback.

Your clothing should be professional and appropriate to the settings and activities in which you'll be participating. You will need to check your school's dress code policy for details. In addition, you may wish to check with your building principal to see if there are any school-specific practices of which you would wish to comply. Remember, it is never wrong to dress above the standard; it is not wise to dress below it or to challenge it.

As you prepare to enter the teaching profession, it seems a good time to read through and familiarize yourself with the Professional Code of Conduct on the PDE website.

<http://www.pspc.education.pa.gov/Documents/Statutes%20Regs%20Forms/Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>

How Do We Confirm Teacher Candidates Have Completed Their Field Experiences?

In the OPC section of the COE website and third attachment to this document, you will find a Teacher Certification Field Experience /Competency Log Sheet. You will complete a separate form for each course.

If you have been assigned a mentor, be sure to have him/her sign and date the form, verifying the completion of your experience. You will detail your field experience on the form and then submit it to your course instructor who will verify that you have demonstrated the identified PDE competencies for the course. Your instructor may include this form as part of your course assignments or may have you turn it in to the OPC directly.

When is the OPC Open?

The OPC's current hours for clearances are Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and 2-4 p.m. There may be occasions when the OPC's hours vary; when that is the case, a note will be posted on the door with an explanation. The OPC has extended hours during the first week of each semester.

How Will Arts Integration Experiences Be Handled?

One of the goals of the PreK-4 teacher-preparation program is for students to understand how integration of the arts enhances teaching and learning of subject matter, as well as enhancing children's arts sensibilities and skills. Candidates pursuing the PreK-4 certification demonstrate this understanding through their course work. For more details on the arts integration experiences program and how to complete the AIEs, please contact your TLT academic adviser.

The OPC plays no role in securing placements for arts integration experiences; candidates are responsible for completing their arts integration experience on their own.

Who Should You Talk to about Problems or Issues You Encounter?

If you have problems with placements or need special accommodations, please feel free to contact the OPC Coordinator of Field Placements, Carla Kologie (cak210@lehigh.edu or 610-758-5648). We will then do our best to see that those problems get resolved quickly.

TABLE 2. Distribution of Field Experiences across the Elementary Curriculum
















Course Title		Hrs of Field Experience	Stage	
SpEd 332. Education and Inclusion of Individuals with Special Needs in K-12		6	1	
SpEd/TLT 404. Diversity, Families, and School Collaborations in K-12		5 + 5	1 + 2	
SpEd/TLT 405. Principles and Applications of K-12 Assessment		5 + 5	2 + 3	
TLT 407. Instructional Design for K-12 Classrooms		0		
TLT 380. Child Development and Cognition		5	1	
SpEd/TLT 409. K-12 Classroom Environment and Management		5 + 5	1 + 2	
SpEd/TLT 411. Early Childhood Education		2 + 3	1 + 2	
TLT 412. Social Studies in PreK through 4th Grade		12	3	
TLT 420. Reading and Literacy in PreK through 4th Grade		12	3	
TLT 422. Language Arts in PreK through 4th Grade		12	3	
TLT 426. Science in PreK through 4th Grade		12	3	
TLT 428. Mathematics and Numeracy in PreK through 4th Grade		12	3	
SpEd 465. Advanced Inclusionary Practices in K-12		5 + 5	2 + 3	
TLT 444. Student Teaching Seminar		80	3	
Total for candidates seeking only PreK-4 certification:		196	Stage 1:	23 hrs
			Stage 2:	23 hrs
			Stage 3:	150 hrs
SpEd 418. Alternative Curricular Approaches		12	3	
SpEd 419. Academic Interventions: PreK-8		15	3	
SpEd 421. Intensive Intervention in Mathematics and Content Area Literacy		12	3	
SpEd 423. Supporting Transition for Individuals with Disabilities		5 + 5	3	
SpEd 432. Positive Behavior Support		12	3	
SpEd 452. Assessment in Special Education		12	3	
Total for candidates seeking dual certification (both PreK-4 general education and PreK-12 special education)		269	Addit'l Stage 1:	5 hrs
			Addit'l Stage 2:	5 hrs
			Addit'l Stage 3:	63 hrs
Student Teaching (If also completing SpEd, TLT 442 replaces 444 above)		12 weeks	4	
<p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours listed above are minimums. Stage 1 hrs in RED. Stage 2 hrs in BLUE. Stage 3 hrs in PURPLE. Stage 4 hrs in GREEN. For elementary dual certification, candidate must teach a minimum of 6 weeks in a K-4 classroom setting and a minimum of 6 weeks in a special education setting. <p> Indicates course that is required in both elementary and secondary teacher-preparation programs.</p>				

TABLE 3. Distribution of Field Experiences across the Secondary Curriculum

Course Title		Hrs of Field Experience	Stage	
SpEd 332. Education/Inclusion of Individuals with Special Needs in K-12		6	1	
SpEd/TLT 404. Diversity, Families, and School Collaborations in K-12		5 + 5	1 + 2	
SpEd/TLT 405. Principles and Applications of K-12 Assessment		5 + 5	2 + 3	
TLT 407. Instructional Design for K-12 Classrooms		0		
SpEd/TLT 409. K-12 Classroom Environment and Management		5 + 5	1 + 2	
TLT 432. Reading & Critical Thinking in Middle Level & High School Educ.		2 + 8	2 + 3	
TLT 43x. Content-area Special Teaching Methods (TLT 431, 434, 436, 438)		2 + 8	2 + 3	
SpEd 465. Advanced Inclusionary Practices in K-12		5 + 5	2 + 3	
TLT 440. Pre-professional Seminar (20 full days in schools)		80	3	
TLT 444. Student Teaching Seminar		80	3	
Total for candidates seeking only 7-12 general education certification		226	Stage 1:	16 hrs
			Stage 2:	24 hrs
			Stage 3:	186 hrs
TLT 411. Early Childhood Education		2 + 3	1 & 2	
SpEd 418. Alternative Curricular Approaches		12	3	
SpEd 419. Intensive Intervention in Reading		15	3	
SpEd 432. Positive Behavior Support		12	3	
SpEd 452. Assessment in Special Education		12	3	
SpEd 421. Academic Interventions: Secondary		12	3	
SpEd 423. Transition to Post-school Life		5 + 5	1 + 2	
Total for candidates seeking secondary dual certification (both 7-12 general education and PK-12 special education)		224	Addit'l Stage 1:	7 hrs
			Addit'l Stage 2:	8 hrs
			Addit'l Stage 3:	63 hrs
Student Teaching		12 weeks	4	
NOTES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours listed above are minimums. Stage 1 hrs in RED. Stage 2 hrs in BLUE. Stage 3 hrs in PURPLE. Stage 4 hrs in GREEN. For secondary dual certification, candidate must teach a minimum of 6 weeks in a 7-12 classroom setting and a minimum of 6 weeks in a special education setting. Indicates course that is required in both elementary and secondary teacher-preparation programs.				



Teacher Certification Field Experience/Competency Log Sheet

Please submit a fieldwork log PER course. Remember that each course's fieldwork is separate.

For example, if you are enrolled in two courses that both require 10 hours of fieldwork, together this means you must complete 20 hours of fieldwork.

Semester: _____ Student Name (Printed): _____

Course Code and Instructor Name: _____ (i.e. SpEd 123 - Smith)

Alternate Experience assigned in class: Yes _____ No _____

(If alternate experience*, skip to "Hours spent" below.)

Name of Field Experience Location: _____

Mentor Name: _____ Email: _____

Mentor Signature: _____

(If no mentor name available, please ask a supervisor or site official to sign form)

Please list the following:

Grade:

Subject:

Your syllabus will explain the number of fieldwork hours you will spend in each stage.

Stage 1, 2 and 3 only are recorded on this form. Stage 4 is student teaching.

Hours spent in classroom/on alternate experience

Stage 1: ____ Stage 2: ____ Stage 3: ____

Student Confirmation: I confirm by my signature below that I completed these field experiences as listed and described on this form.

Date: _____

Instructor Confirmation: I confirm that the above student completed the field experiences and demonstrated competencies as described in the course syllabus.

Date: _____

Note: Student completes all of form except for mentor/instructor signatures.

*Alternate experience refers to an assignment by the instructor that may be an assessment review, video evaluation, or other non-school fulfillment of placement hours.