



## **Benefits, Policy and Practices for Student Teaching Placement and Support**

The Wyoming School-University Partnership focuses on teacher and leader development through partnership among K-12 schools, higher education, and other education stakeholders. This focus is designed to support prospective and current teachers and educational leaders as they make Wyoming and the world a better place to live and learn.

The mission of the Wyoming School-University Partnership is as follows:

Member organizations work together to ensure that students at all levels reach their full learning potential and that educators are prepared to provide high quality education.

This document provides the benefits, policies, and practices for student teaching placement and support through the Wyoming School-University Partnership (WSUP) pertaining solely to student teachers in UW College of Education programs.

### **Eligibility of Wyoming Districts to Receive Student Teachers**

In 2017, the members of the Wyoming School-University Partnership Governing Board agreed that only Wyoming school districts that are members of the WSUP will be eligible to be chosen by College of Education preservice teachers as a placement site for student teaching.

Annual membership by a school district in the Wyoming School-University Partnership qualifies a district to be included on the placement preference list for student teaching applications for the current fiscal year (assuming membership is paid by September). By paying membership dues for one fiscal year, the district agrees to host student teachers during the semesters appropriate for any student teaching applications made during that year. Approval for individual student teachers to be placed in a particular district will always be a decision made by the district.

### **Benefits of WSUP Membership Related to Student Teaching Placements**

Wyoming districts that are members of the WSUP will be eligible to receive CoE student teachers. Because of its commitment to preservice teachers, the Wyoming School-University Partnership is perfectly situated to support the collaboration between K-12 schools and the work of preparing students for the teaching profession. Wyoming school districts that are members of the Wyoming School-University Partnership are committed to this collaborative process.

The collaborative work of preparing preservice teachers includes the following:

- Selection of mentor teachers;
- Screening of potential preservice teachers;
- Professional development for mentor teachers;
- Support for both student and mentor teachers;
- Review of data relative to the program strengths and weaknesses;
- Ongoing improvement as a result of data review.

As a result of being placed in a WSUP school district, student teachers should expect to find the following qualities/benefits in the schools where they student teach:

- **Awareness of the role of public schools in a democracy.** In alignment with the NNER foundational beliefs, schools prepare students to be engaged members of society. It should be clear to a student teacher within a WSUP district that this is a value held and practiced within the schools.
- **Community of caring.** Schools that are members of the WSUP prioritize and reflect a community of people who care about teaching and learning. Preservice teachers can anticipate that they will be welcomed into the community and will learn from it.
- **Relational approach to student teaching.** Instead of operating as an individualistic transaction between a student teacher and a mentor teacher, student teaching through the WSUP districts engages all partners in a collaborative, supportive community.
- **Standard of excellence.** Being a member of the WSUP ensures that districts have agreed to abide by its policies. This agreement ensures that the district chooses mentor teachers who have adequate skills, knowledge, and experience and that ongoing support and professional development related to mentoring is provided by the College of Education.
- **Care for student teaching policies.** WSUP districts are informed about and agree to abide by policies that affect the student teaching experience. This ensures equity in the experience of student teachers, regardless of the district placement.

As a Partnership, all parties have responsibilities.

By joining the Wyoming School-University Partnership, school districts commit to providing a school community that is striving towards the qualities described above.

All members of the Partnership should be engaged in all aspects of the student teaching experience. Some examples of this engagement might be as follows:

- **Selection of mentor teachers.** Although school districts make the final determination about which teachers should serve as mentors, UW personnel can provide recommendations for the qualities and experiences that typically are found in high-quality mentors.
- **Screening of potential preservice teachers.** Although UW personnel are responsible for screening preservice teachers prior to student teaching, school districts make the final determination about which student teachers to place in their classrooms.
- **Professional development for mentor teachers.** UW personnel have created online modules to support mentor teachers and provide introductory workshops (in person or through distance) for mentors. School district and UW personnel work together to determine additional support needed and to continuously improve the quality of the professional development provided.
- **Support for both student and mentor teachers.** UW employs supervisors and other personnel to provide support to student and mentor teachers during the student teaching semester. School district and UW personnel work together as additional or differing support are needed during that critical time frame.
- **Review of data and ongoing improvement.** UW personnel collect and provide program data to members of the Student Teaching Steering Committee, so that processes can be continuously revised and improved.
- **Layers of support.** The University of Wyoming provides an infrastructure of support for student teachers and mentor teachers both before and during the student teaching experience. This infrastructure includes faculty or non-faculty supervisors, regional facilitators, and support for completion of the edTPA, a performance assessment.
- **High quality student teachers.** Prospective student teachers are screened by University of Wyoming staff and administration, to ensure that they are ready for the student teaching experience, including GPA, dispositions, criminal background checks, Wyoming PTSB Substitute Teaching Permit, and others.

### **Timeline for Student Teaching Application and Determination of Placement**

- Fall (Year 1): Online application for student teaching is made available to students, usually due in early December;
- March (Year 1): After applications are screened, they are sent to school district personnel, and placement information is sent back to the CoE;
- Late May/early June (Year 1): Information about placement is sent to the UW students and to the mentor teachers.
- Fall (Year 2): Elementary student teachers have a three-week practicum in their school placements;
- Spring (Year 2): All student teachers report to their school placements, following the district calendar, in January.

Beginning Fall 2020, the College of Education/School of Teacher Education will begin offering a fall student teaching opportunity, for elementary education student teachers only. The placement timeline for fall placements will be similar to that described above, but the process will begin in the Spring semester.

### **Student Teacher Support**

The College of Education provides support for student teachers, including the following:

- **Supervisors.** All student teachers will be assigned a university supervisor (either university faculty or non-faculty supervisors), who will visit at least 5 times during the student teaching semester; 2 of those visits may be virtual.
- **Facilitators.** In districts where the College of Education has traditionally had large numbers of placements, district facilitators are hired on a part-time or full-time basis, to provide additional support to student teachers.

### **Mentor Teacher Identification**

In order to provide support for student teachers, mentor teachers will be selected by the school district in which a student teacher is placed. District personnel have knowledge of the unique experiences and expertise of the teachers they choose to serve as mentors for student teachers. Some minimum criteria for consideration include the following:

The mentor teacher...

- holds a standard educator license in the content area and at the level of the prospective student teacher;
- is employed on a continuing contract for the academic year that they would serve as a mentor teacher;
- has approval/support from the building principal to serve as a preservice mentor; and
- has experience in a leadership or mentorship role.

### **Mentor Teacher Professional Development**

WSUP members agreed that professional development for mentor teachers would be required. As a result, we have developed a set of online modules to support mentor teachers.

Unit 1: UW Program and Requirements includes the following objectives:

- the evaluation process of student teachers required by the University of Wyoming's teacher education programs in the College of Education;
- how to navigate LiveText in order to complete midterm and final evaluations;

- the edTPA Tasks, as well as the mentor's potential role in the student teacher's completion of the edTPA;
- who to contact when additional support as a mentor is needed;
- the process used by UW for handling a student teacher who is struggling;
- student teaching timelines as well as due dates for student teacher evaluations; and
- roles and responsibilities of the people involved with student teachers.

Unit 2: Foundations of Mentoring includes the following objectives:

- the expectations, roles and responsibilities of a mentor;
- the professional conduct of a mentor; and
- what it looks like to be a mentor.

Unit 3: Building Relationships includes the following objectives:

- initiate a positive relationship
- establish trust and rapport
- enact productive communication; and
- overcome challenges

Unit 4: Collaborative Planning and Teaching includes content organized around the following topics:

- modeled planning and teaching
- guided planning and teaching
- shared planning and teaching
- monitored planning and teaching

Unit 5: Feedback is currently still being built.

All mentors must complete Units 1 and 2 of the mentor teacher modules in the semester prior to their service as a mentor teacher and Units 3, 4, and 5 during the semester in which they are student teaching.

### **Student Teaching Steering Committee**

The purpose of the Student Teaching Steering Committee is to resolve problems, provide feedback on ongoing improvements, and in other ways operate collaboratively on issues related to student teaching. Members of the Student Teaching Steering Committee will be selected to represent member organizations of the Wyoming School-University Partnership. Collectively, members of the Student Teaching Steering Committee will

- Review data related to student teaching, such as placement numbers, supervision numbers, and aggregated data from final student teaching evaluations and the edTPA;

- Review data related to mentoring, such as professional development completion data;
- Collect and analyze feedback data from districts and UW regarding the student teaching experience, including successes and problems; and
- Based on the data reviewed, make recommendations to the Wyoming School University Partnership and its institutional members regarding potential changes in future student teaching experiences.