



Clinical Practice Handbook

A Guide for Teacher Candidates

2026-2027

University of Southern Indiana

Teacher Education Department

8600 University Boulevard

Evansville, IN 47712

(812) 465-7024

www.usi.edu/science/teacher-education

Welcome!	4
TEACHER CANDIDATE	5
Policies, Responsibilities, and Procedures	5
Policies.....	5
Educator Preparation Background Check Policy	5
Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory.....	6
Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory Statements	7
Attendance	8
Clinical Placement Attendance Policy	8
Mandatory Attendance Requirement.....	8
Emergency Absence Procedures.....	8
Unexcused Absences.....	9
Tardiness and Partial Attendance	9
Policy Summary	9
Inclement Weather	10
Calendar	10
Children of Teacher Candidates.....	10
Professional Etiquette	10
Food and Drinks	10
USI Professional Dress Code	10
Professional Communication, Use of Technology, and Social Media	13
Cell Phones and Electronic Devices	13
Email	13
Social Media and Public Image	14
Disposition Alert Policy	14
Clinical Practice Placement Termination Policy	14
Responsibilities and Procedures.....	15
Placement Requirements	15
Time Log.....	15

USI Consent for Release of Information and Self-Disclosure Form.....	15
Observation Indicators for Clinical Practice	16
Competencies	16
Exploration Phase Competency Statements	16
Analysis Phase Competency Statements	17
Phase-Specific Expectations for Your Clinical Experience	19
Gradual Release Model Timeline Suggestion (EXPLORATION)	19
Gradual Release Model Timeline Suggestion (ANALYSIS).....	21
Teacher Candidate Checklist	24
Clinical Practice Handbook Signature Page	24

Welcome!

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, ...who strives valiantly...who actually strives to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause... --Theodore Roosevelt (The Man in the Arena)

Clinical experiences offer valuable opportunities for teacher candidates to grow through expert mentorship and meaningful hands-on learning. These experiences help teacher candidates connect theory to practice, strengthen instructional and classroom management skills, and make informed, evidence-based decisions.

As guests in the school community, teacher candidates are expected to follow all policies and procedures and to view their time in classrooms as a privilege. Clinical experiences can be rewarding, challenging, and sometimes overwhelming—all important parts of the learning process. The experience includes three phases:

In the **Exploration Phase**, **teacher candidates** begin their journey by working closely with their mentor teachers to observe daily classroom routines, learn the roles and responsibilities of educators, and experience what teaching looks like in real school settings. Candidates may work one-on-one with students, support small groups, or assist with whole-group activities as appropriate. This phase occurs in shorter time blocks and allows candidates to explore whether a career in education is the right fit for them. USI instructors also observe candidates during this phase to provide encouragement and formative feedback.

In the **Analysis Phase**, **teacher candidates** are placed in a local school for full-day experiences, where they work alongside their mentor teachers in whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one settings. Candidates become more fully immersed in the daily rhythms of the classroom, taking on greater responsibilities as they grow in confidence and skill. USI faculty are on site or available to observe and support candidates, offering guidance and feedback that strengthens their developing practice.

Synthesis Phase: Clinical interns complete a 16-week placement in an elementary, middle, or high school. Using the co-teaching model, interns are fully immersed in the daily work of teaching, including planning, instruction, classroom management, assessment, and reflection.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Becky Moore, M.A.Ed.

Director of Clinical Practice

rjmoore3@usi.edu

TEACHER CANDIDATE

Policies, Responsibilities, and Procedures

Policies

Educator Preparation Background Check Policy

To ensure the safety of children and meet the expectations of P–12 partner schools and agencies, all teacher candidates must complete and clear required background checks before registering for any USI course involving children under 18, whether in-person or virtual. Candidates are financially responsible for all background check requirements.

National Background Check (Castlebranch®)

Teacher candidates must have a current national background check on file with the Office of Clinical Experiences (OCE) prior to registering for clinical experience courses. This check includes felonies, misdemeanors, and sex offenses at the state and county level.

- **Validity:** Five years for most courses; three years for Early Childhood courses.
- Candidates must complete a new background check upon expiration to continue clinical experiences.

Indiana Expanded Child Protection Index (Castlebranch®)

This check reviews allegations of child abuse or neglect within Indiana.

- **Validity:** Five years.
- Candidates must complete a new check upon expiration to continue clinical experiences.

CA/N Check (Child Abuse and Neglect)

All students participating in clinical experiences are required to complete a **Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) Check**. This check verifies that an individual does not have a substantiated record of child abuse or neglect and is required for work in public schools.

CA/N Checks are processed through the **Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services** via the **Kentucky Online Gateway (KOG)** and are facilitated by the **Office of Clinical Experiences**.

Students must complete the CA/N Check **prior to the start of clinical practice**. Failure to follow established procedures or meet deadlines may delay or prevent placement.

USI Consent for Release of Information and Self-Disclosure Form

This form provides a full disclosure of any issues affecting a candidate's eligibility or professional conduct. A new form must be submitted **each semester** before beginning a clinical experience.

Additional Requirements

Some P–12 partner schools or agencies may require additional background inquiries. Early Childhood placements often require state-mandated fingerprinting through Castlebranch® for candidates spending more than 7½ hours in one month at a site.

Review of Background Concerns

If any background inquiry reveals issues that could affect licensure or employment, the Educator Preparation Issues Committee reviews the materials and determines if the candidate may continue in the program. Factors considered include: nature and seriousness of the offense, time elapsed since the offense, relationship of the offense to the duties and responsibilities of an educator, and evidence of rehabilitation or treatment.

Program Dismissal

USI may immediately remove a candidate from any teacher preparation program if there is reason to believe the individual—is the subject of a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect, or has pending charges for, or a conviction of, an offense requiring license revocation under I.C. 20-28-5-8.

Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory

Professional dispositions are "the habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator's performance" (InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, p. 6) and are fundamental to effective teaching. They shape how teacher candidates interact with students, colleagues, and the school community during clinical practice.

Before the first clinical placement in the Exploration Phase, candidates must complete a self-assessment using the **Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory** in Watermark™. During clinical experiences, both mentor teachers and university instructors evaluate candidates' professional dispositions. Any disposition rated as "disagree" will prompt a meeting with the university instructor to discuss improvement and, if needed, develop a **Student Progress Review**

plan. In some cases, the review process may involve the Student Affairs Committee and could result in further interventions or dismissal from the program.

Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory Statements

Professional Dispositions are defined as “the habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator’s performance” (InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, p. 6).

The following professional dispositions have been adopted by the Teacher Education Department at the University of Southern Indiana and are aligned to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standard R1. The Teacher Education Department has determined that the following dispositions are essential for an effective teacher.

The teacher candidate demonstrates a commitment to the teaching profession and adheres to continuous development as a professional. The teacher candidate:

- 1) Demonstrates high expectations for self and P-12 students.
- 2) Demonstrates patience and compassion by providing appropriate wait time for student responses and offering positive reinforcement to P-12 students experiencing difficulty during the learning process.
- 3) Communicates respectfully and responsively in diverse environments without imposing personal or cultural values.
- 4) Actively seeks out new information and innovative, evidence-based teaching strategies.
- 5) Demonstrates the ability to maintain cognitive capacity (attention, focus, memory, and processing speed needed to understand complex information) in university and P-12 classrooms.
- 6) Analyzes, synthesizes, integrates concepts, and problem-solves to formulate assessment and educational judgments.
- 7) Demonstrates the ability to work with frequent interruptions, to respond appropriately to unexpected situations, and to be flexible in rapidly changing circumstances. This includes demonstrating flexibility during the learning process.
- 8) Organizes time and materials, prioritizes tasks, performs several tasks at once, and adapts to changing situations and environments.
- 9) Demonstrates appropriate use of technology during meetings, classes, and clinical experiences.
- 10) Demonstrates an awareness of appropriate social boundaries between P-12 students and educators and adheres to those boundaries.
- 11) Thinks analytically about educational issues and reflects thoughtfully on their practices.
- 12) Demonstrates compliance with federal and state laws and all USI handbook policies.
- 13) Adheres to USI’s academic integrity policy.
- 14) Expresses themselves effectively in written and oral English to communicate concepts, assignments, evaluations, and expectations with members of the learning community, such as Teacher Education faculty, P-12 students, parents, administrators, and other school and community personnel.
- 15) Maintains P-12 student confidentiality, disclosing information only for professional purposes or as legally required by law.
- 16) Demonstrates a calm demeanor and effective coping strategies in stressful environments and addresses issues of concern professionally.
- 17) Maintains appropriate personal hygiene and dresses professionally, adhering to guidelines outlined in the applicable USI handbook.
- 18) Consistently meets course and clinical experience policies and requirements.

- 19) Is punctual and maintains regular attendance for professional commitments, including classes and clinical experiences.
- 20) Seeks assistance promptly from instructors and supervisors.
- 21) Responds appropriately to constructive criticism from instructors and supervisors.
- 22) Functions effectively in a collaborative team, whether with peers, P-12 students, parents, other school personnel, or community members.

Attendance

Clinical Placement Attendance Policy

Mandatory Attendance Requirement

Attendance for all assigned clinical practicum days is **mandatory**. Participation in P-12 clinical placements is a required component of teacher preparation, aligned with state licensure, accreditation standards, and university policy. Attendance is necessary for continued placement and progression in the Educator Preparation Program. Teacher candidates are responsible for following the attendance policy as outlined in the course syllabus and sharing attendance with mentor teacher. Teacher candidates are responsible for reporting and documenting all absences, while the university instructor and mentor teacher collaborate to monitor attendance, address concerns, and ensure proper documentation is maintained.

How sick is too sick to go to school? Teacher candidates must follow the health guidelines established for P-12 students. Teacher candidates must stay away from school if they are suffering from vomiting, diarrhea, fever over 100 degrees, unexplained rashes, chicken pox, pink eye, impetigo, scabies, ringworm, or any type of contagious disease.

Emergency Absence Procedures

In the event of a verified emergency (e.g., medical emergency, death in the immediate family), the following steps must be followed:

Advance Notification—The teacher candidate must notify all three parties via USI email before the start of the school day—University instructor, Assigned P-12 mentor teacher, Director of Clinical Practice

Official Documentation—Verification of the emergency (e.g., hospital discharge summary, obituary, accident report) must be submitted to the university instructor and Director of Clinical Practice within 48 hours. Failure to provide documentation within this timeframe will result in the absence being recorded as unexcused.

Make-Up Experience—If the absence is excused, the candidate **may** be eligible for a make-up experience. Make-up hours are not guaranteed, depend on P-12 school availability, and must be completed within the academic term. Final approval is determined by course instructor and may consult the Director of Clinical Practice.

Unexcused Absences

An absence without timely communication and official documentation will be considered unexcused.

- A Disposition Alert may be filed.
- A formal meeting will be held with the teacher candidate, Director of Clinical Practice, and course instructor.

Following the meeting, one or more of the following actions may occur:

- Development and implementation of an Improvement Plan under the Student Progress Review policy
- Modification of the candidate's clinical placement
- Temporary suspension from the placement
- Revocation of the clinical placement

Reinstatement to a placement, if deemed appropriate, will be coordinated through the Office of Clinical Experiences and is not guaranteed.

Tardiness and Partial Attendance

Timeliness, clear and regular communication, and complete participation are professional expectations. Repeated instances of tardiness or early departure may be treated as unexcused absences, with consequences as outlined above. The following procedures apply:

- **First incident:**
 - Written warning
 - Documentation in the candidate's professional file
- **Second incident:**
 - Disposition Alert
 - Meeting with Director of Clinical Practice and university instructor
 - Possible implementation of an **Improvement Plan**
 - Potential removal from the clinical placement

Policy Summary

To remain in good standing within the clinical placement, teacher candidates must:

- Follow the attendance policy as outlined in course syllabus. Be present and engaged for a minimum of 90-95% of scheduled clinical days.
- Follow all emergency communication protocols
- Complete any assigned make-up experiences, if approved. This decision will be made by mentor teacher availability and consent, in consultation with university instructor.
- Demonstrate consistent professional conduct, including punctuality, preparedness, and

respectful communication.

Inclement Weather

Days when school is closed due to inclement weather do not count against the teacher candidate. The Time Log should indicate any scheduled observation days that result in a day closed due to weather/emergencies. The Director of Clinical Practice will determine whether inclement weather days need to be made up.

Calendar

Teacher candidates will follow the USI calendar for holidays and breaks. Check the school/district calendar for days that schools are not in session. Classes may meet on the USI campus when school is closed. USI instructors will provide information for individual course schedules. The Time Log should indicate any scheduled observation days that are missed as a result of the day the site/school is closed.

Children of Teacher Candidates

Children of teacher candidates may NOT accompany their parents to a clinical experience. This is strictly prohibited by the University of Southern Indiana.

Professional Etiquette

Teacher candidates should address mentor teachers, administration, instructors, and professors by appropriate title and not simply by his or her first or last name. For example, Dr. Sheila Smith should not be addressed as Sheila or Smith. The salutation appropriate to the profession is expected. For example, Dr. Sheila Smith would be Dr. Smith, and Mr. Bill Ralph would be Mr. Ralph. The norm of the educational setting should be followed and request the advice of your instructor or mentor teacher if unsure. This type of etiquette encompasses both face-to-face, written, and/or electronic communication.

Food and Drinks

Teacher candidates may not chew gum on school property or eat food during instructional time. Food should be consumed only during designated breaks or lunch periods. Beverages are permitted in classrooms only when kept in a closed, lidded, discreet, opaque container. Teacher candidates are responsible for ensuring that any beverage brought into the classroom is appropriate and school approved.

USI Professional Dress Code

Professional Perception and Compliance

Teacher candidates are expected to be perceived as professionals, not students. Professional appearance is an essential component of professional disposition. Teacher candidates must positively represent themselves, USI, and the P–12 school community. A *business casual* wardrobe serves as the standard; attire must be conservative, clean, and appropriate for a P–12 school setting—not trendy or distracting.

- Teacher candidates must follow guidance provided by the mentor teacher, school administrator, and university instructor at all times.
- Candidates must adhere to this dress code during all clinical placements, including Exploration and Analysis Phase courses.
- Failure to comply with the dress code constitutes a **Professional Disposition concern**.
 - Violations may result in a Disposition Alert.
 - Candidates may be asked to leave the site and may not return until dressed appropriately.
 - Continued violations may result in removal from the clinical placement.
- **School administrators have final authority regarding appropriateness of attire.**

Name Badge Requirements

- A **USI Photo Name Badge** is required
 - Available from the Eagle Access Office for \$5
- Must be worn on the shirt collar or on a visible lanyard.
- Teacher candidates must follow the photo ID requirements of the clinical placement site.
- USI Student ID badges displaying a student identification number may **not** be worn.

Hygiene and Grooming

Teacher candidates are expected to maintain appropriate personal hygiene at all times.

- Clothing must be clean, properly fitted, and pressed or ironed as needed.
- Hair and nails must be neat, clean, and appropriate length.
- Hair color must be natural.
 - Unnatural hair colors (e.g., purple, green, pink, or bright red) are not permitted.
- Hairstyles must not distract from the learning environment.
- Facial hair, if worn, must be clean and neatly trimmed.

Accessories and Fragrance

- Jewelry must be minimal and professional

- Piercings—visible piercings must be subtle and not a distraction to the learning process – this includes earrings, septum nose rings, eyebrow, lip, tongue, or other. If necessary, piercings should be replaced with clear spacers.
- Cologne, perfume, and other fragrances must be used sparingly, with consideration for student and staff sensitivities
- Artificial eyelashes or other accessories that may distract from instruction are not permitted

Shirts and Blouses

- No athletic-style T-shirts or sweatshirts shall be worn (with or without hoods).
- Shirts, blouses, and sweaters must fit appropriately (not too tight, short, baggy, or revealing).
- Low-cut or revealing clothing is not permitted.
 - Midriff and cleavage must be fully covered and not be exposed during normal teaching activities.

Pants, Skirts, Dresses, etc.

- Colored denim pants may be worn.
- Skirts and dresses must be no more than 2 to 4 inches above the knee.
 - **Modesty and Discretion:** Ultimately, school administration reserves the right to make a final judgment on attire deemed inappropriate or disruptive to the learning environment, regardless of specific measurements.
- No cargo pants with multiple pockets on the legs.
- No clothing that is torn, faded, wrinkled, too baggy, or too tight.
- Leggings or jeggings must be worn with a tunic-length top (must cover lower torso).
- No flannel or pajama-style pants.
- No shorts of any kind (unless teaching physical education, with approval).

Footwear

- Must be clean, safe, and appropriate for school environment
- Flip flops or Crocs® are not permitted
- Clean, well-maintained tennis shoes or athletic shoes are allowed when they present a professional appearance.
- Unacceptable footwear includes shoes that are dirty or worn, have excessive logos or bright/neon colors, contain distracting designs or lights, resemble slippers, flip-flops, slides, or footwear that is not appropriate for a professional school setting.

Spirit Days

With guidance and approval from the mentor teacher and university instructor, teacher candidates may participate in school spirit days.

- May include school-themed T-shirts, themed dress, or jeans
- Denim jeans may **only** be worn on designated spirit days with approval from mentor teacher, administrator, and/or university instructor. Jeans may not be torn, faded, too baggy, or too tight.
- Teacher candidates should be aware of the professional perception required on special spirit days. It is important to maintain professionalism while participating in school spirit days. Additionally, it is important to respect the guidance provided by mentor teachers, administrators, and university instructors.

Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) sponsors the Professional Dress Closet, located in the Teacher Education Department. All items are available for \$1.00 each. The closet is open daily, and access is provided by checking with the Teacher Education Department Administrative Assistant.

Professional Communication, Use of Technology, and Social Media

Teacher candidates are expected to maintain professional communication and boundaries at all times during clinical experiences. In case of emergencies, teacher candidates can text or call their mentor teachers for immediate communication. While written and oral communication among peers is often casual and informal, it is imperative for teacher candidates to be mindful of professional expectations in this regard. Conventional English must be used in all written and oral correspondences with mentor teachers, principals, and university instructors.

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Cell phones and other electronic devices should **never be visible** while a candidate is engaged in a clinical experience, unless a mentor teacher requests for safety/emergency use, but not for personal use. Personal use, including texting, checking social media, personal email, or talking on the phone, is strictly prohibited when in the presence of students. If a candidate anticipates an emergency call, they must notify the mentor teacher at the start of the day.

Email

Teacher candidates must use their **USI email account** for all communication with university instructors, site coordinators, principals, and teachers. Personal email accounts (e.g., Yahoo®, Hotmail®, Gmail®) should not be used. Candidates must check their USI email **daily**, as it is the primary source of communication regarding deadlines, expectations, and critical information.

Failure to check email may result in missed deadlines or delayed clinical experiences. Teacher candidates are encouraged to communicate through USI email to ensure legal documentation.

Social Media and Public Image

Candidates must maintain a **professional public image**, including on social media platforms such as Facebook®, Instagram®, Snapchat®, and TikTok®. Teacher candidates should **not connect or communicate with students or parents** on these platforms, as this constitutes a breach of professional boundaries. Most schools have policies regarding the use of email and cell phones by students and school personnel, and teacher candidates must adhere strictly to these guidelines.

Disposition Alert Policy

The Disposition Alert process complements the evaluation of teacher candidates' academic performance by assessing professionalism and professional dispositions. USI Teacher Education recognizes that professional dispositions are skills that can be developed; therefore, ongoing assessment, timely feedback, and the use of the alert process when necessary support early and effective intervention.

This process provides a consistent approach to assessing and supporting candidates' professional growth throughout their preparation program. Stakeholders—including university instructors, mentor teachers, and the Director of Clinical Practice—are encouraged to report concerns and address misconduct as appropriate.

The full Disposition Alert Policy is available on the USI Teacher Education website.

Clinical Practice Placement Termination Policy

When concerns arise regarding a teacher candidate's performance, attendance, and/or professional dispositions, the following procedures apply:

Initial Concerns:

Concerns are first addressed by the course instructor, and a Disposition Alert may be filed.

Continued or Serious Concerns:

If concerns persist or are more serious in nature, the Director of Clinical Practice may suspend the candidate's clinical placement. A Student Progress Review plan may be developed, when appropriate.

Code of Conduct or Policy Violations:

If a teacher candidate violates the USI Code of Conduct or the policies of the assigned school, the USI Dean of Students will be involved in determining the candidate's status.

Immediate Suspension or Termination:

A school district, principal, mentor teacher, course instructor, or other relevant USI teacher education personnel may suspend or terminate a clinical placement for issues deemed serious in nature. In such cases, no Student Progress Review plan will be implemented.

Placement Reassignment:

A teacher candidate whose placement is terminated by the P-12 site, school, or the USI Office of Clinical Experiences will not be placed in another site, school, or grade level for the remainder of the semester.

Responsibilities and Procedures

Maintaining clinical practice expectations is essential for a successful placement. When expectations are not met, additional support and review may be required, which could include removal from the current placement and possible initiation of a Student Progress Review process. Decisions regarding reinstatement or relocation are made with the goal of supporting candidate growth and program integrity.

Placement Requirements

Teacher candidates must complete all required components and trainings before beginning their clinical experiences. This includes background checks, fingerprinting for Early Childhood courses, FERPA training, and orientation sessions. Completion of these requirements ensures compliance with university, state, and P-12 partner school policies and prepares candidates for a safe and professional clinical placement.

Time Log

Teacher candidates must keep an accurate record of days and hours on the **Time Log, found in Watermark™**. This Log in Watermark™ should be updated after each visit, and it is the teacher candidate's responsibility to maintain accurate records. Each log entry submitted will be approved/rejected by the mentor teacher or university instructor.

USI Consent for Release of Information and Self-Disclosure Form

This form provides a comprehensive picture of any issues that the teacher candidate has faced. A new application must be completed and submitted each semester prior to beginning a new clinical experience. (see Appendix for link).

Observation Indicators for Clinical Practice

During your clinical practice experience, university instructors will use the indicators to guide formative observation and provide feedback that supports your growth. These expectations reflect essential competencies for effective teaching and align with professional standards for educator preparation.

Domain 1: Supporting Learning Development, Differences, and the Environment

- 1A. Demonstrate an understanding of student development.
- 1B. Design Instruction to Promote & Differentiate Student Success and Learning
- 1C. Create learning environments to support all children's needs.

Domain 2: Content Knowledge and Application of Subject Matter

- 2A. Create learning environments to support all children's needs.
- 2B. Engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving to understand subject matter content.

Domain 3: Science of Reading Content Knowledge and Application of Subject Matter

- 3A. Reading Component Implementation
- 3B. Reading Science Application
- 3C. Literacy Content Knowledge (Science of Reading)

Domain 4: Instructional Practice & Assessment

- 4A. Plan and deliver standards-based, data-driven differentiated instruction that engages students, makes effective use of contemporary tools and technologies, and helps all students achieve learning goals
- 4B. Prioritizes the use of a variety of instructional strategies.
- 4C. Plans for instruction based on formative and summative assessment data, prior learner knowledge, and learner interest.

Domain 5: Professionalism

- 5A. Engages in professional behavior in accordance with the profession.
- 5B. Demonstrates ethical judgment in accordance with the profession.

Competencies

Exploration Phase Competency Statements

Domain 1: Facilitating Learning (Individual, Small Group, Whole Group)

- **Demonstrates Content Knowledge and Uses Academic Vocabulary**
Displays foundational content knowledge and uses appropriate academic vocabulary to support student understanding.
- **Internalizes and Uses Curriculum Materials**
Uses curriculum materials with growing independence, referencing guides while beginning to adapt for instructional needs.

Commented [MB1]: LEAVE IN HANDBOOK OR JUST USE INDICATORS???

- **Understands Students and Responds to Their Needs**

Demonstrates awareness of students' backgrounds and individual needs, beginning to adjust instruction accordingly.

- **Engages and Involves Students in Learning**

Uses basic strategies to engage students and encourage participation during activities.

- **Maintains Focus and Communicates Clear Objectives**

Maintains instructional focus and communicates clear learning objectives in student-friendly language.

- **Provides Clear Directions for Students**

Gives directions that students can generally follow with minimal clarification.

- **Uses Student Questioning to Support Learning**

Uses questioning strategies to check for understanding and encourage student thinking.

Domain 3: Professionalism

- **Creates a Respectful, Well-Managed Learning Environment**

Establishes a respectful classroom climate and begins to implement classroom management strategies to support learning.

- **Reflects on Teaching Practice**

Engages in basic self-reflection to identify strengths and areas for growth.

- **Seeks and Applies Feedback for Improvement**

Demonstrates a willingness to receive and apply feedback from mentors and supervisors.

Analysis Phase Competency Statements

Domain 1: Planning (Individual, Small Group, Whole Group)

- **Prepares Materials and Plans Effectively**

Prepares and organizes lesson materials in advance to support instruction, ensuring resources are accessible and aligned with lesson objectives.

- **Develops Clear Learning Goals Aligned with Standards**

Crafts specific, measurable, and standards-aligned learning goals using clear, actionable verbs appropriate for student readiness.

- **Designs Detailed, Aligned Lesson Plans**

Develops complete, structured lesson plans that incorporate appropriate instructional activities and aligned assessments to measure objectives.

- **Uses Assessment Data in Planning**

Integrates assessment data and prior student performance to inform planning, showing awareness of diverse student needs and readiness levels.

- **Designs Aligned Assessments**

Develops assessments that clearly align with learning objectives and effectively measure student understanding.

Domain 2: Instruction (Individual, Small Group, Whole Group)

- **Communicates Learning Objectives and Expectations**

Clearly shares learning objectives and academic expectations, referencing objectives throughout instruction to maintain focus and student understanding.

- **Demonstrates Content Knowledge and Uses Academic Vocabulary**

Delivers instruction with accurate, confident content knowledge, consistently using and reinforcing appropriate academic vocabulary.

- **Implements Varied, Aligned Instructional Strategies**

Uses a range of instructional strategies aligned with objectives, balancing teacher-directed instruction with active student participation.

- **Facilitates Student Engagement and Participation**

Uses multiple engagement strategies to encourage broad student participation, fostering an interactive learning environment.

- **Uses Effective Questioning to Promote Higher-Level Thinking**

Incorporates questioning techniques that require students to analyze, explain, and apply concepts, promoting deeper understanding.

- **Monitors Understanding and Responds to Student Needs**

Consistently checks for understanding using varied methods, monitors student work, and adjusts instruction or provides clarification as needed.

- **Manages Classroom and Uses Instructional Time Effectively**

Implements effective classroom management strategies and maintains instructional focus, maximizing learning time.

- **Balances Structure with Flexibility During Instruction**

Follows the lesson plan while adapting instruction in response to student needs, demonstrating flexibility to support learning.

Domain 3: Professionalism

- **Seeks and Applies Feedback for Professional Growth**

Regularly seeks specific feedback on teaching practice, implements suggestions thoughtfully, and identifies areas for continued improvement.

- **Reflects on Teaching Practice**

Engages in ongoing, thoughtful reflection on teaching experiences, using insights to improve future instruction.

Phase-Specific Expectations for Your Clinical Experience

As you progress through your clinical experiences, your mentor teacher and university instructor will support you using a gradual release model—moving from observing, to assisting, to leading instruction as appropriate. Expectations shift across each phase to help you grow confidently and successfully.

Gradual Release Model Timeline Suggestion (EXPLORATION)

Competency Domain	I Do / Observation & Initial Practice	We Do / Guided Practice & Feedback	You Do Together / Supported Independence	You Do Independently / Demonstrated Competency
Facilitating Learning				
Demonstrates Content Knowledge and Uses Academic Vocabulary	Observes mentor using accurate content and vocabulary. Begins to incorporate academic vocabulary in one-on-one settings.	Uses content vocabulary in planned small group activities with support.	Independently integrates vocabulary in small group and begins in whole group.	Demonstrates consistent and accurate use of content-specific vocabulary across settings.
Internalizes and Uses Curriculum Materials	Reviews and discusses curriculum guides with mentor. Begins using materials for basic planning.	Plans small group instruction using curriculum materials with mentor guidance.	Independently adapts curriculum for small group/individual needs.	Selects, adapts, and implements curriculum independently with fidelity and responsiveness.
Understands Students and Responds to Their Needs	Learns about students' backgrounds and needs through observation and discussion.	Begins to modify instruction with mentor input based on student needs.	Designs learning experiences that consider varied student backgrounds.	Independently adjusts instruction and materials based on student performance and individual needs.
Engages and Involves Students in Learning	Observes strategies used to engage learners. Tries brief	Practices using engagement strategies during	Selects and uses age-appropriate engagement	Uses multiple, effective engagement strategies to

	engagement strategies (e.g., attention-getters).	small group lessons.	strategies independently.	involve all learners consistently.
Maintains Focus and Communicates Clear Objectives	Observes how objectives are introduced and lessons are paced.	Practices writing and stating objectives with mentor feedback.	Delivers instruction with clear objectives and pacing in guided settings.	Clearly communicates objectives and maintains lesson focus independently.
Provides Clear Directions for Students	Models and repeats directions with mentor assistance.	Practices giving directions for small tasks and revises based on student responses.	Gives multi-step directions in small and whole group with some reminders.	Gives concise, effective directions that students follow with minimal need for clarification.
Uses Student Questioning to Support Learning	Observes mentor's questioning techniques and participates in debriefs.	Practices asking recall and basic comprehension questions.	Uses higher-order questions with support and prompts.	Independently uses a variety of questions to check understanding and promote thinking.
Domain 3: Professionalism				
Creates a Respectful, Well-Managed Learning Environment	Observes mentor's classroom expectations and interactions.	Begins implementing classroom procedures with supervision.	Maintains classroom expectations with growing confidence.	Consistently promotes a respectful environment and manages student behavior effectively.
Reflects on Teaching Practice	Participates in guided reflection conversations with mentor and supervisor.	Identifies successes and challenges in lesson delivery; begins journaling or written reflections.	Reflects on student learning outcomes and instructional effectiveness.	Independently identifies strengths and areas for growth and sets goals for improvement.

Seeks and Applies Feedback for Improvement	Listens to feedback and participates in debriefs.	Begins implementing feedback in lesson revisions and teaching.	Proactively seeks feedback and applies it to planning and instruction.	Consistently incorporates feedback into professional practice with minimal prompting.
--	---	--	--	---

Gradual Release Model Timeline Suggestion (ANALYSIS)

Competency Domain	I Do / Observation & Initial Practice	We Do / Guided Practice & Feedback	You Do Together / Supported Independence	You Do Independently / Demonstrated Competency
Domain 1: Planning				
Prepares Materials and Plans Effectively	Observes mentor preparing materials. Assists in gathering resources for lessons.	Prepares materials for small group lessons with feedback.	Prepares and organizes materials for individual and small group lessons independently.	Prepares and organizes all materials in advance for whole group instruction aligned with objectives.
Develops Clear Learning Goals Aligned with Standards	Reviews mentor's objectives and standard alignment.	Drafts learning goals with mentor support and edits for clarity.	Creates measurable goals aligned with standards for supported lessons.	Develops clear, measurable, standards-aligned goals independently across lesson formats.
Designs Detailed, Aligned Lesson Plans	Reviews mentor lesson plans and planning templates.	Drafts lesson plans with mentor support using structured templates.	Creates full lesson plans with aligned activities and formative checks.	Independently designs well-structured, fully aligned lessons with objectives, activities, and assessments.
Uses Assessment Data in Planning	Reviews assessment data with mentor and	Uses sample data to inform small group lesson planning.	References current student data to adjust lesson plans and groupings.	Independently integrates assessment data into planning for

	discusses implications.			targeted instruction.
Designs Aligned Assessments	Reviews mentor-designed assessments and their alignment to objectives.	Drafts formative assessments aligned to specific learning goals with support.	Designs exit slips and other checks aligned to planned instruction.	Develops aligned formative and summative assessments to evaluate student learning.
Domain 2: Instruction				
Communicates Learning Objectives and Expectations	Observes how mentor communicates objectives and expectations.	Practices stating objectives at lesson launch with mentor input.	States and references objectives during instruction with increasing fluency.	Consistently communicates and revisits objectives to guide learning throughout instruction.
Demonstrates Content Knowledge and Uses Academic Vocabulary	Observes mentor modeling academic language and content delivery.	Practices using content-specific vocabulary during small group lessons.	Incorporates accurate vocabulary in both planned and spontaneous instruction.	Demonstrates consistent and confident content knowledge and vocabulary use.
Implements Varied, Aligned Instructional Strategies	Observes instructional strategies used across groups and content areas.	Implements modeled strategies during small group lessons.	Chooses and adapts strategies based on student need and instructional goals.	Uses a variety of aligned strategies to support all learners during instruction.
Facilitates Student Engagement and Participation	Assists in engaging students with attention strategies and prompts.	Leads parts of lessons using modeled engagement techniques.	Designs and delivers lessons using participation strategies.	Independently facilitates consistent student engagement and interaction.
Uses Effective Questioning to Promote Higher-Level Thinking	Observes mentor's questioning techniques and student responses.	Asks planned comprehension and analytical questions during lessons.	Uses questions to probe understanding and support metacognition.	Uses varied questioning strategies to promote critical thinking and discussion.

Monitors Understanding and Responds to Student Needs	Watches mentor monitor work and give timely feedback.	Uses simple checks for understanding (e.g., thumbs up, quick write).	Monitors student progress during instruction and adjusts support as needed.	Consistently uses data and observation to adjust teaching in real-time.
Manages Classroom and Uses Instructional Time Effectively	Observes routines, transitions, and time management strategies.	Practices implementing routines with mentor support.	Maintains focus and pacing with occasional guidance.	Independently manages time, transitions, and student behavior efficiently.
Balances Structure with Flexibility During Instruction	Follows scripted plans and observes mentor flexibility.	Begins to adapt plans in the moment with prompting.	Balances planning with responsiveness to student needs.	Adjusts instruction smoothly in real time to maximize learning outcomes.
Domain 3: Professionalism				
Seeks and Applies Feedback for Professional Growth	Receives feedback and engages in reflection discussions.	Implements feedback into revised plans and lessons.	Seeks specific feedback and applies it to instruction.	Regularly requests and integrates feedback to grow professionally.
Reflects on Teaching Practice	Participates in reflective conversations and debriefs.	Writes brief reflections on teaching experiences with guidance.	Analyzes successes and challenges independently and identifies adjustments.	Engages in thoughtful, consistent reflection to improve instructional practice.

Teacher Candidate Checklist

Task	Timeline
Complete all components/trainings as applicable (background checks, fingerprinting *ECE*, FERPA training, orientation)	Beginning of semester
USI Consent for Release of Information and Self-Disclosure Form	Beginning of semester
Read Clinical Practice Handbook and complete signature page	Beginning of semester
Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory	Beginning of semester
Complete Time Logs in Watermark™	Weekly
Complete Teacher Candidate Disposition Inventory	Before semester begins

Clinical Practice Handbook Signature Page

[Clinical Practice Handbook Signature Page Link](#)