

**POLICY: Assisting Students At-Risk for Practicum Failure**

**ADOPTION DATE: 1-27-06**

The field-based practica in the special education certification programs provide the preservice teacher opportunities to practice effective instruction and management skills. Cooperating teachers and university faculty must balance the needs and development of preservice teachers with the obligation to provide quality services for student with disabilities. It is the goal of cooperating teachers and university faculty to see each preservice teacher succeed. However, on occasion, preservice teachers may have deficits in instruction and management skills (or may have made limited progress in the development of instruction and management skills) such that the quality of instruction provided to students with disabilities is seriously compromised. When this occurs the cooperating teacher and practicum supervisor must decide whether the preservice teacher should continue in the practica as it is presently structured. The procedures outlined below are designed to help the preservice teacher, cooperating teacher and university supervisor make that decision. Serious problems in practica should be identified and addressed with these procedures as early as possible in the semester to maximize improvements in preservice teacher's instruction and management skills and to minimize the effects of inadequate instruction on students with disabilities. (This procedure does not cover violations of public school policy, or issues related to attendance, dress, hygiene or ethical conduct. Those are covered in Professional Behavior Guidelines issued to each student.)

In practica, each of the supervisor's observations address a sequential set of teaching skills (e.g., presentations and praise; presentations, praise, plus corrections), skills related to teaching in different formats (e.g., group instruction) or skills related to teaching different student activities (e.g., reading, math, life skills). Competence is required in all of these teaching skills. Therefore,

1. The practicum student (or preservice teacher) will be expected to earn a "C" or better on each formal (i.e., graded) observation per semester.
2. If a "C-" or below is earned on any formal observation, the supervisor will notify the preservice teacher and cooperating teacher of the failed practicum observation. The supervisor will refer the preservice teacher to this policy and should clearly specify in writing the necessary improvements and communicate them to the preservice teacher.
3. The supervisor will conduct four observations within a period of two weeks. In the first three at-risk observations, the supervisor will provide feedback in effort to increase the student's skills. No grade will be recorded in the first three at-risk observations although the supervisor may interpret performance to the preservice teacher in terms of what grade would have been delivered. The fourth at-risk observation will be graded PASS/FAIL. If the fourth at-risk observation is graded PASS (i.e., "C" or better), the preservice teacher will be allowed to continue in the current practicum. No letter grade will be recorded. The original failing grade for the formal observation will remain. However, if the fourth at-risk observation is graded FAIL, the practicum coordinator will discuss various options with the preservice teacher, the supervisor, and the cooperating teacher (see #4 below).

- a) 4. If at-risk observations do not result in successful performance, the preservice teacher, supervisor, and practicum coordinator will discuss options with the department advisor.
5. At-risk observations may be conducted by the same supervisor or additional trained supervisors. If scheduling or other pertinent issues prevent the original supervisor from conducting four observations in two weeks, the supervisor may designate one or more additional trained supervisors to conduct observations.
6. After the 4<sup>th</sup> graded observation has been scored, the preservice teacher, supervisor, cooperating teacher, and practicum coordinator (if necessary) will meet to evaluate whether the preservice teacher has met the criteria for continuation. Documentation must include notification date of at-risk status, evaluation dates across the two-week period, written feedback, and notes from the meeting.
7. At-risk observations (i.e., four observations in two weeks) may occur only once per practicum. A second observation grade of C- or below will result in a failing grade for the practicum.
8. The supervisor will compute the practicum grade as an average of all formal observation grades.
9. During practica, supervisors may visit and observe students at any time for purposes of providing feedback. These visits may follow requests from the student for additional assistance, recommendations from the cooperating teacher, or desires of the supervisor.
10. In order to maintain parity in evaluation procedures across students and across teaching skills, the number of formal observations to be conducted during a practicum will be equal to the number specified in the practicum syllabus.

**Notification of At-Risk Status\***

Name:

Date:

NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS to be made during at-risk period:

I have reviewed and approve of all conditions stated above regarding necessary improvements to be made during the at-risk period:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preservice Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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OUTCOME of at-risk observations (check one below)

\_\_\_\_\_ Preservice teacher successfully met necessary improvements and obtained an observation grade of PASS.

\_\_\_\_\_ Preservice teacher unsuccessfully met necessary improvements and obtained a grade of FAIL. See Policy entitled "Assisting Students At-Risk for Practicum Failure #4" for options. Refer to department advisor for additional considerations.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (describe):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*Attach this form to observation forms resulting in a grade of C- or below. Attach and clearly label the additional at-risk observation forms and the feedback. Make copies of all documents available to the preservice teacher.