Field Experience Handbook

Empire State College
Master of Arts in Teaching Program
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Overview

The field experiences in the MAT program help teacher candidates connect course readings with school and classroom realities. Each course in the Introductory Component of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program (MAT) at Empire State College requires an average of 12.5 hours of field experiences — either in the classroom or in the community.

Early field experiences are open-ended, thus allowing those new to teaching time to get accustomed to school cultures and giving those with experience time to re-examine education from a new vantage point. Assignments in the Fall term (Middle Childhood & Adolescent Development, Effective Urban Schools) thus encourage teacher candidates to observe the entire school, not only the host teacher’s classroom. Assignments for subsequent courses in the Spring term (Teaching and Learning, Exceptionalities) provide teacher candidates with opportunities to develop their own approaches to teaching and learning. During the Exceptionalities course, 15 hours of field experience must be completed in special education settings (specific requirements will be determined by your Exceptionalities faculty member). The special education hours must be completed in grades 7-12 only.

To be eligible for Transitional B certification, you must complete a total of 50 hours of field experience. Ideally, this requirement would be met through a succession of Fall and Spring placements. To be eligible for both middle childhood (5th-9th) and adolescent (7th-12th) certification, you must complete field experience hours in the following grade distributions: 5-6th grade, 7-9th grade, and 10-12th grade. **A minimum of 5 hours is needed in each of the three settings.** The remaining hours may be distributed anywhere between 5th and 12th grade. The MAT Program may allow certain field experience requirements to be waived based on documented evidence of previous and relevant classroom experience. The maximum number of hours eligible to be waived is 20 and must be approved by the Director of Teacher Education. MAT course assignments linked to field experience are not exempted through this process and must be fully completed as part of program course work and requirements. If you have any questions or concerns about fulfilling your field experience requirement, please contact your faculty advisor or our Administrative Aide, Shiela Danforth, at 518-587-2100 ext. 2230.

*Please note: Students who pursue the Residency pathway instead of the Transitional B certification pathway must complete 100 total hours of field experience before beginning their Residency placement.*
Guidelines for Field Experiences

After discussing possibilities with an MAT faculty advisor, host teachers will make final determinations as to the nature of field experiences in their classrooms. Below is a list of possible field experience activities:

- Observe class sessions without participating
- Attend after-school meetings or tutoring sessions
- Tutor a student or lead a small group of students in a learning activity
- Arrange a bulletin board or learning display
- Help prepare instructional materials
- Help in distribution of materials and clean-up after an activity
- Provide individual help during an activity
- Discuss assignments with students
- Observe special education, remedial reading, art, music and/or PE classes
- Give directions to class or small group for a lesson the teacher has planned
- Help tutor a bilingual or non-English speaking student in English
- Participate in general activities of the school day; for instance, fire drill
- Accompany the teacher on lunchroom duty
- Participate in a field trip
- Attend union meetings
- Attend parent association meetings
- Visit the teachers' lounge
- Observe summer school programs or alternative evening programs

Expectations:

Be unobtrusive, but involved. Avoid interrupting classroom routines. Arrive at either the beginning or the end of a class session. Become familiar with and follow all the rules of the school and individual classroom. Be as involved in the classroom as your host teacher will permit, but remember that you are there to listen to and learn from the culture of that particular classroom and school.

Dress appropriately. Ask your host teacher in advance about appropriate dress for the school you will be observing. Your appearance should not distract students from their usual routines.

Follow school procedures. Observe school procedures while you are visiting. For example, if there is a fire drill, you should take part in the drill. Notify the school if you will be late or absent. Sign in and out of the main office each time you visit. Use the recommended entrances (do not enter through an inappropriate entrance even if the door may be open).
Maintain the confidentiality of the students and teachers in your field experience notes. Avoid using people’s real names if you discuss your observations in the context of your course assignments. Never identify specific individuals.

Document all visits using the Field Experience Record form.

Frequently Asked Questions:

**Will I be observed by the professor?** No. Your attendance will be monitored by the time sheets. Your participation will be evident in the assignments submitted for class. The host teacher’s evaluation form will also be used to review your field experience.

**What is a “host teacher”?** Host teachers are tenured classroom teachers in the 5th through 12th grade that allow you to observe their classroom as part of your learning. Current students in the MAT program cannot serve as host teachers for you.

**How do I arrange a field experience placement?** In general, students are responsible for arranging their field experience placements. You should contact local schools and provide a letter of introduction. Contact the Coordinator for Teacher Education, Lindy Godlewski (Lindy.Godlewski@esc.edu), for this letter. Talk to your primary advisor or course instructor to find out if your region has established field experience procedures with specific local school districts.

**Will I ever be left alone with students?** No. You may be asked to lead small group discussions or to tutor a student, but should never have sole responsibility for the class.

**Do I need to complete all of my field experience hours in my content area?** No. The majority of your field experience should be conducted in your content area, but you may complete some of your field experience hours in classrooms outside of your content area. Please remember that 15 hours of field experience must be completed in special education settings.

**What schedule should I follow for completion of my 50 hours of field experience?** Most students complete 25 hours in the Fall semester and 25 hours in the Spring semester. If you need to follow a different schedule, check with your course instructors to be sure your course assignments will not be negatively impacted. Keep in mind that you must complete placements in three settings (5-6, 7-9, 10-12) in order to qualify for both Middle Childhood and Adolescent levels of certification.

**Will MAT faculty visit the school site?** MAT faculty may visit host teachers, but they will not be evaluating your work.

**What if I completed 50 hours of field experience during the first year of the program and then decide to pursue the Residency pathway?** The additional 50 hours required for the Residency can be completed in summer school settings prior to beginning the Residency placement.
Becoming Familiar with Your School

Prior to visiting your school, try to find out as much information about the school as possible. A good source is the school’s web site or a prior phone call with your host teacher. You may find it helpful to use the following questions as a guide when you are gathering this information.

1. Where is the school located?
2. Where do visitors park?
3. Which entrance should I use?
4. What hours are classes in session?
5. What grades attend this school? Are students grouped in teams? Does the school use block scheduling?
6. Does the school have a dress code for teachers? Students?
7. What are the arrangements for special education? Inclusion, resource room, self-contained rooms?
8. What is the average number of students per room? Where do the students eat lunch?
9. What is the make-up of the students—gender, ethnicity? What is the rate of free/reduced lunch in the school?
10. What is the neighborhood like? How does it compare to the neighborhood you grew up in?
11. How are the halls decorated? How are the classrooms decorated? What does this say to me (how do I feel) as I observe in the school?
12. What is the teacher’s language, demeanor (e.g. respectful, conciliatory)? How do the students respond?
13. Would I be comfortable in this school? Why or why not?
Field Experience Forms

You are responsible for submitting two forms documenting your field experience: the MAT Field Experience Record and the Review of Field Experience. You or your host teacher may return these forms to the MAT program office.

Completed forms should be mailed to:

SUNY Empire State College  
MAT Program  
111 West Avenue  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

If you have any questions about these forms, feel free to contact the MAT Administrative Aide, Shiela Danforth at 518-587-2100 ext. 2230 or Shiela.Danforth@esc.edu. Additional copies of these forms can be found on our website under the “Graduate Form Center” link on the left-hand side of the page: http://www.esc.edu/graduate-studies/.