



**EARLY
CHILDHOOD
STUDIES**

C H A N N E L
I S L A N D S

MENTOR TEACHER & SITE DIRECTOR HANDBOOK

Early Childhood Studies



***ECS 461 Early Childhood Student
Teaching I: Infants/Toddlers
Term Year 2026-2027***

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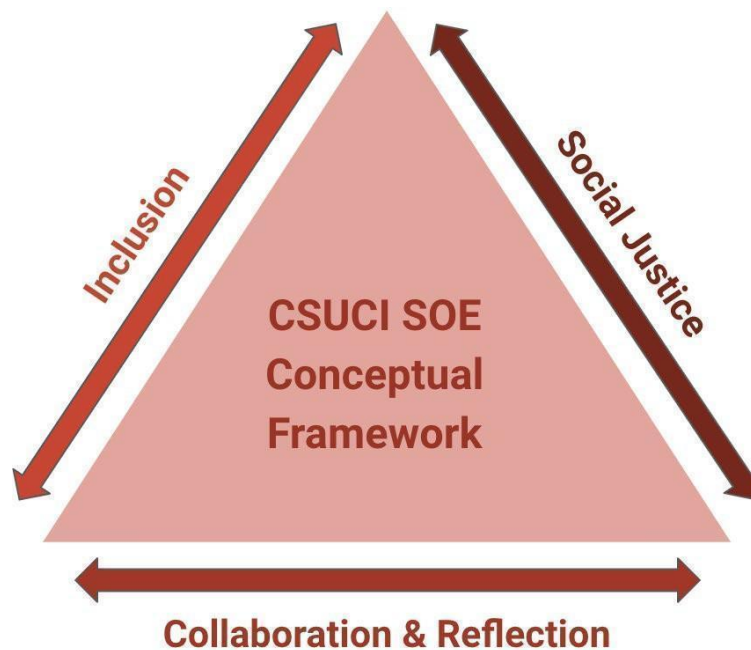
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PROGRAM

CSUCI School of Education Conceptual



The School of Education (SOE) conceptual framework is informed by the following interconnected, interdependent three tenets: social justice, inclusion, collaboration, and reflective practice.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to each and every one. Intersecting identities may consist of race, indigeneity, socioeconomic status, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, immigration/refugee status, spirituality, language, and education (Crenshaw, 1991; Martinez, 2018; Timothy, 2019). The School of Education is committed to enacting culturally and linguistically sustaining

pedagogical (Paris & Alim, 2017) approaches that are accessible, inclusive of abilities, multiple literacies, and the intersectional identities that impact the lived experiences of children, youth, families, and communities.

Social Justice

As Cochran-Smith (2001) argued, it is “not enough for beginning teachers to learn the basic skills of managing classrooms and constructing well-crafted lessons for all students” (p.3). Additionally, education professionals (for example: teachers, counselors, administrators, and other educational leaders) must be prepared to critique and reimagine educational practices as well as envision education as a “practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994, p. 12). CSUCI’s School of Education is committed to developing future education professionals who will be able to discern and think critically about systems of power that have shaped and continue to influence our educational landscape (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Our School of Education is dedicated to preparing future education professionals to be active agents of change who take a stance and disrupt systemic racism, inequities, and injustices that manifest themselves in and outside of classrooms to transform our local communities and beyond. These efforts will be informed by theory, systemic, and systematic inquiry as students combine practical and research knowledge around problems of practice to transform educational systems.

Collaboration & Reflection

The School of Education sees education professionals as learners who critically engage in inquiry through self-reflection and research-informed approaches to advance equity-minded practices (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Hernandez & Endo, 2017). Critical reflective education professionals participate in on-going learning (Han, Blank & Berson, 2020), embody a sense of care and accountability towards communities, and demonstrate positive dispositions towards families’ funds of knowledge which helps them understand the cultural-historical contexts of the communities they serve (Moll, 2019) and thus create strong positionalities to sustain reciprocal community partnerships.

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES PROGRAM

The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Studies (ECS) prepares students to work effectively with young children from birth through eight years of age and their families. Our program develops the knowledge and skills necessary to work with the youngest community members, including the embedding of substantive training across the program in developmentally, culturally, and ability appropriate for all children with a special emphasis on dual language learners and children with special needs. In completing the major, ECS students acquire the competencies to serve both young children within the natural settings of home, community, and schools.

The academic program offers core curricula and fieldwork in early childhood development and pedagogy while highlighting family engagement in the context of family, culture, language, and society. Unique to our program is the field work experience as well as service learning as most of our courses require students to experience early childhood in a variety of diverse settings.

The BA in Early Childhood Studies is accredited by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students are qualified to teach in and administer programs serving young children (with and without disabilities) from birth through eight and their families.
2. Students actively engage children in their learning.
3. Students are able to teach all subjects in their area of specialty and link content to pedagogy.
4. Students acknowledge and support diversity of languages and cultures in and among children and families.
5. Students meet the diverse needs of all children including those with special needs.
6. Students are reflective and deliberative practitioners, integrating research, theory, and effective practices into their teaching.

NAEYC PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION STANDARD

Standard 6: Becoming a Professional

Candidates prepared in early childhood degree programs identify and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession. They know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on their work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are informed advocates for sound educational practices and policies.

Key elements of Standard 6

6a: Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field

6b: Knowing about and upholding ethical standards and other early childhood professional guidelines

6c: Engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice; using technology effectively with young children, with peers, and as a professional resource.

6d: Integrating knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on early education.

6e: Engaging in informed advocacy for young children and the early childhood profession.

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES FACULTY

Name	Title	Email
*Bloom, Krista	Lecturer	krista.bloom@csuci.edu
Bynder, Regan	Lecturer	regan.bynder@csuci.edu
*Chase, Lauren	Lecturer	lauren.chase@csuci.edu
*Connolly, Debbie	Lecturer	deborah.connolly@csuci.edu
Galaviz, Loretta	Lecturer	loretta.galaviz@csuci.edu
McKinnon, Candice, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	candice.Mckinnon@csuci.edu
Park, Kay (Kyunghwa), Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	kyunghwa.park@csuci.edu
Ramos, Lorena	Lecturer	lorena.ramos@csuci.edu
Riojas-Cortez, Mari, Ph.D.	Professor & Chair	mari.riojas-cortez@csuci.edu
Sadiq, Assadullah, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	assadullah.sadiq@csuci.edu
Taha-Resnick, Adria, Ed.D.	Lecturer	adria.taha-resnick@csuci.edu
White, Annie, Ed.D.	Associate Professor	annie.white@csuci.edu

****ECS 461 Student teacher university supervisors for 2026-2027***

ECS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT COORDINATOR

Gissell Toxqui: gissell.toxqui@csuci.edu

LETTER FROM PROGRAM CHAIR

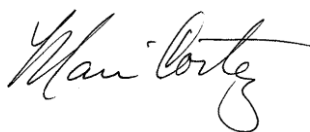
Dear Community Partners,

Thank you for hosting our student teachers. We are very excited to be able to continue with our partnership. Our student teachers are ready to be part of your program. We have provided a handbook that will help explain expectations and procedures for the student teaching experience. The handbook also includes the forms that the student teachers need to turn in to their university supervisor. It is the responsibility of the student to complete all forms. The student teaching experience will be 14 weeks, two days a week, 7.5 hours each day (7 hours working with children and 30 minutes lunch). Student teachers know that they need to arrive on time and stay for the entire day. Students have selected preferred days which they will share with you. If there is an issue with those days, please let the student teachers know as well as their university supervisor.

We expect for our students to be fully engaged in the classrooms, as they are teachers in practice. It is important for the student teachers to know about curriculum, strategies, learning environments, and families. We would also like for them to learn about children who are dual language learners and culturally diverse. Similarly, student teachers need to know how to work with children who have special abilities and diverse families. This is a great opportunity for student teachers to be fully engaged in effective teaching and socially just as well as equitable practices. The university supervisors will be observing student teachers 5 times throughout the 14-week period. Each observation will be one hour with adjustments to actual observation and feedback time. After the observation, the university supervisor will meet with the student teacher to provide immediate feedback. Student teachers will share their midterm and final evaluations with their mentor teachers at which point the mentor teacher will provide feedback. You can find a copy of the forms in the handbook as well. We have high expectations for our student teachers, but if any issues arise, please contact the university supervisor immediately.

On behalf of the Early Childhood Studies program at Cal State Channel Islands, I thank you for your continued partnership. We look forward to working with you this semester and in the future. Please don't hesitate to contact me at mari.riojas-cortez@csuci.edu.

Sincerely,

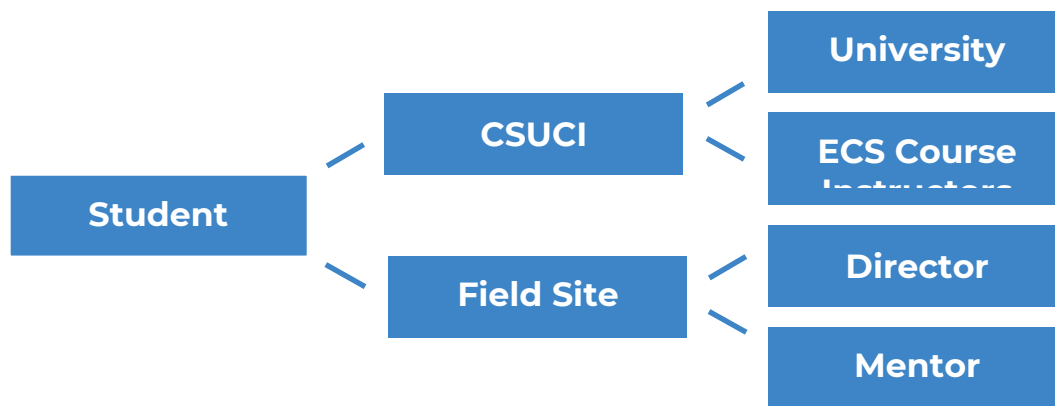
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mari Cortez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mari" and last name "Cortez" clearly distinguishable.

Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D
Professor & Chair
Early Childhood Studies

STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The student teaching experience is a collaborative effort between the ECS program, the field site, and the mentor teachers. Figure 1 displays all stakeholders for the student teaching experience.

Figure 1. Student Teaching Experience



Mentor teachers serve as co-educators in preparing future early childhood professionals. As the mentor, you support the student teacher's development through observation, reflection, and increasing responsibility across the semester.

This includes:

- Modeling intentional teaching practices
- Making thinking visible (explaining decisions and strategies)
- Supporting student reflection and growth
- Providing consistent, actionable feedback

BEFORE STUDENTS BEGIN

Preparing Your Classroom & Community

- Inform children, families, and staff of the student teacher's role
- Position the student teacher as a developing educator and active member of the teaching team.
- Prepare the teaching team by establishing clear expectations for collaboration, communication, support, and feedback practices
- Prepare materials and access to classroom resources

Setting Up a Welcoming First Week

- Introduce the student teacher to children, families, teachers and staff
- Include them in conversations and routines
- Model expectations clearly
- Normalize questions and uncertainty
- Model reflective practice rather than perfection

Mini Orientation to Site/Classroom

- Review classroom routines, schedules, and expectations.
- Explain program policies, safety procedures, and communication practices.
- Introduce classroom materials, spaces, and organizational systems.
- Review behavior guidance practices and teaching strategies
- Introduce curriculum planning processes

Classroom Diversity & Children's Needs

- Discuss cultural and linguistic diversity within the classroom community.
- Review individual learning needs and support plans (IFSPs/IEPs, if applicable)
- Share relevant family and community context.
- Model inclusive practices that support participation and belonging.

Review Timeline & Expectations Together

- Review the student teaching timeline and university program expectations (see Appendix).
- Examine the progression from observation to independent teaching responsibilities.
- Establish a consistent weekly check-in schedule.
- Ensure students have access to the student teaching attendance QR code and are able to use it for tracking their hours. (QR codes for the current semester will be distributed by Gissell prior to students' first week of student teaching.)

WEEKLY MENTORING

Duration of Student Teaching

Student teaching is 14 weeks, two days a week for 7.5 hours each day, 7 hours with the children and 30 minutes for lunch (i.e., 28 days x 7.5 hours = 210 hours). Student teaching begins the second week of the semester and ends the last week of instruction. Attendance is required every week, as this is also considered a course. Student teaching is a cumulative experience, and attendance every week is required. Students must stay the entire day and may NOT leave early. Lunch and breaks times are scheduled at the discretion of field site, following site protocol.

Gradual Increase of Responsibility

Mentor teachers support student progression from:

- Observation
- Guided Support
- Collaborative Teaching
- Independent Teaching

Feedback Expectations

1. **Strength-based:** Feedback highlights and builds upon the student teacher's existing strengths to promote confidence and effective practice. It recognizes what is working well while using those strengths as a foundation for growth.
2. **Actionable:** Feedback includes clear, specific next steps that the student teacher can implement in their practice. Suggestions should be practical, observable, and directly connected to the goals identified during the observation.
3. **Aligned to NAEYC Standards:** Feedback is grounded in the National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Standards and Competencies. This ensures that guidance and evaluation are consistent with nationally recognized expectations for early childhood educators.

Suggested Framework

1. **Describe:** Objectively state what was observed during the lesson or interaction without judgment or interpretation. This includes specific behaviors, language, and actions demonstrated by the student teacher and children.
2. **Interpret:** Explain the significance of what was observed, connecting it to child development, learning theory, or program expectations. This step helps the student understand why the practice is effective or where it may need adjustment.
3. **Suggest:** The supervisor offers clear, actionable recommendations for next steps to strengthen practice. Suggestions should be specific, practical, and directly connected to the observation and the student teacher's goals.

EVALUATIONS

Informal Observation Visits

University supervisors are required to complete a minimum of five (5) observations over the course of the semester, three (3) informal and two (2) formal observations. Each visit is scheduled for approximately one (1) hour, typically including a 30-45 minute observation followed by a 15-minute debrief with the student teacher.

Scheduling observations is a shared responsibility with clearly defined roles. Student teachers must first meet with their mentor teacher to understand the classroom schedule and identify appropriate observation windows, then communicate those options to the university supervisor. The university supervisor will finalize and share their observation schedule, and the student teacher is responsible for confirming and communicating those dates and times with the mentor teacher.

Formal Observation Process

Formal observations take place between weeks 11-15 in the student teaching experience. During this time, student teachers will be implementing their three (3) planned activities with the children. University supervisors will observe two (2) activities while mentor teachers observe one (1).

Mentor teachers:

- Support planning
- Observe one formal activity
- Provide feedback aligned with program expectations (See Appendix)

Midterm Evaluation

The midterm evaluation is a collaborative assessment completed by the student teacher, mentor teacher, and university supervisor as follows:

1. **Self-Evaluation:** The student teacher begins by completing the first page of the midterm evaluation, using the provided scale to reflect on their progress.
2. **Mentor Teacher Feedback:** After the self-evaluation is complete, the mentor teacher will provide feedback on the second page of the form.

3. **Discussion:** The completed form should be discussed by the student teacher and university supervisor between weeks 8-9 of the student teaching experience. The university supervisor will review the evaluation, assign a grade, and sign the form during their third informal observation or electronically.

Final Evaluation

The final evaluation is a collaborative assessment completed by the student teacher, mentor teacher, and university supervisor at the conclusion of the student teaching experience, as follows:

1. **Self-Evaluation:** The student teacher begins by completing the first page of the final evaluation, using the provided scale to reflect on their overall progress and growth throughout the semester
2. **Mentor Teacher Feedback:** After the self-evaluation is complete, the mentor teacher will provide written feedback on the second page of the form.
3. **Discussion:** The completed form will be reviewed and discussed by the student teacher and university supervisor during the final weeks of the semester. The university supervisor will review the evaluation, assign a final grade, and sign the form electronically.

SUPPORTING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Play-Based Learning & Intentional Teaching

- Model how play supports learning
- Support planning based on children's interests

Family & Community Engagement

- Support student in building family relationships by engaging in brief, intentional interactions during drop-off and pick-up
- Include student in appropriate communication or meetings with families
- Model respectful, strengths-based interactions

Behavior Guidance & Social-Emotional Support

- Model positive behavior guidance and emotional support strategies.
- Coach consistent, empathetic responses to challenging behavior.
- Support practice of co-regulation and supportive communication with children.
- Facilitate reflective discussions that connect behavior to context, relationships, and environment.

Child-Led Learning

- Model how to follow children's interests to guide planning and instruction.
- Support the student teacher in observing and extending child-initiated play and inquiry.
- Encourage reflection on how environments and interactions promote child-led learning.

Collaboration with University Supervisor

- Communicate regularly with the university supervisor to clarify expectations
- Share observations and feedback to inform consistent, coordinated support for student learning
- Participate in midterm and final evaluations

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS

Address Concerns Early

- Address directly with the student teacher
- Communicate with the university supervisor
- Document if ongoing
- If the concern does not resolve, email Department Chair, Dr. Mari Riojas-Cortez (mari.rijas-cortez@csuci.edu)

Statement of Concern Process

When a student teacher requires additional guidance or is not meeting program expectations, the Statement of Concern (SOC) process is initiated. Students are required to sign the SOC to acknowledge receipt and understanding. If a student refuses or fails to sign, the document will be sent to the student's official CSUCI email with a read receipt as confirmation of delivery. See Appendix E for the SOC form and additional information.

1. When a concern is identified, the instructor, mentor teacher, or university supervisor must clearly define the issue and address it directly with the student teacher in a timely, individual conversation.
2. If the concern persists, the individual who identified the issue must complete a Statement of Concern form, followed by a meeting with the mentor teacher and university supervisor to review the concern and develop an action plan.
3. In more serious situations, the ECS Program Chair meets with all parties to determine next steps, and if removal is necessary, the university supervisor coordinates with the site to obtain written documentation of the concerns.
4. University supervisors are expected to follow this process promptly when significant concerns arise to ensure consistency, accountability, and program integrity.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Attendance

Student teaching is 14 weeks, two days a week for 7.5 hours each day, 7 hours with the children and 30 minutes for lunch (i.e., 28 days x 7.5 hours = 210 hours). Student teaching begins the second week of the semester and ends the last week of instruction. Attendance is required every week. Students must stay the entire day and may NOT leave early.

If an absence is unavoidable due to an emergency, students will contact their mentor teacher and field site as well as the university supervisor, the ECS 460 Professor and Gissell Toxqui (805-437-8525 or gissell.toxqui@csuci.edu). The university supervisor has the right to determine if an absence is excused as an emergency based on the university policy.

Students will have to complete the following steps for attendance purposes:

1. Scan QR code at the entrance of their site or inside the classroom (red folder labeled CSUCI/ECS). Gissell Toxqui will be checking QR-based attendance records weekly. *(QR codes for the current semester will be distributed by Gissell prior to students' first week of student teaching.)*
2. Sign visitor or volunteer log maintained by the field site.
3. Upload ECS program attendance log signed by mentor teacher weekly to ECS 461 Canvas page. University supervisors will be checking signed attendance log weekly.

Weekly Attendance Logs

Students must sign in and out on ECS student teaching log daily during student teaching. Mentor teachers must provide a daily signature to verify attendance at the end of each day. If a student misses a teaching day, they must record the reason for the absence and the planned make-up date on the log. On the make-up day, students must again sign in and out on the second page of the student teaching log to document the completed hours.

University supervisors are responsible for verifying attendance through the weekly student teaching attendance logs submitted in Canvas. Gissell Toxqui will also be checking attendance weekly through QR code sign-in data.

Make-Up Day Policy

- Missing days must be made up within two weeks of the absence.
- Students may count up to one (1) day of site-based professional development toward required student teaching days, with prior supervisor approval.
- Students whose placement begins later in the semester due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., site reassignment and re-fingerprinting, or program-related delays) will receive an adjusted timeline for making up missed days.
- If a classroom/site closes due to an unplanned emergency (i.e., power outage, fire, etc.), student teachers must make up the days, but not more than 2 days.

Student Teaching Adjustment Policy

In cases of documented special circumstances, such as unexpected childcare disruptions, family emergencies, medical needs, or relocation, students may request a temporary or alternative student teaching schedule. Requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must ensure that program learning outcomes, total required instructional hours, and professional competencies are fully met.

Approved adjustments may include:

- Modified schedule
- Redistribution of hours across additional days per week
- Alternative schedule that maintains equivalent total time of required student teaching hours

Students seeking a student teaching adjustment must:

- Communicate concerns as early as possible to the chair and university supervisor
- Provide a clear explanation of the circumstances. Additional documentation may be requested by the program
- Collaborate with program faculty and the placement site to develop a feasible plan

Approval of any student teaching schedule adjustments must be approved by the Department Chair. Approval is not guaranteed and is contingent upon placement site capacity, fulfilling student teaching requirements, and the student's ability to meet all program expectations.

SUGGESTED STUDENT TEACHING TIMELINE

Weeks	Student Teacher	Mentor Teacher	University Supervisor
1 – 2 <i>Getting Acquainted</i>	• Meet with MT/Director • Learn classroom routines and expectations • Observe children and teaching practices • Begin building relationships as children feel comfortable • Support daily tasks and small group activities with MT	• Orient student to the classroom • Share schedule, expectations • Model teaching practices • Review student teaching handbook and timeline together	• Introduce yourself to MT/Director • Publish Canvas page (ECS 461) • Review university supervisor handbook and expectations • Schedule the first two informal observations between weeks 3-6
3 – 6 <i>Developing Teaching Practice</i>	• Continue to build trust with children • Gradually increase responsibility (e.g., read a story, work with small group, set up/clean up, suggest intentional materials/activities each week) • Continue written observations of children • Communicate learning goals with MT and university supervisor • Submit pre-observation form two days before each informal observation in	• Gradually increase student responsibility (e.g., read a story, work with small group, set up/clean up, suggest materials/activities each week) • Provide weekly feedback on performance, progress, and learning goals • Support student teacher-child relationships	• Conduct two (2) informal observations (30-45 mins) • Provide feedback using pre-observation form (student) and informal observation form (supervisor) • Debrief with student (15 mins) • Highlight strengths and support goal setting • Upload graded forms to Canvas

	Canvas (ECS 461)		
Weeks	Student Teacher	Mentor Teacher	University Supervisor
7 – 8 <i>Midterm</i>	• Complete midterm disposition self-evaluation • Gradually increase teaching role (e.g, lead small/large group activities) • Begin brainstorming curriculum plans (3 activities) • Discuss ideas with MT • Submit pre-observation forms two days before informal observation in Canvas (ECS 461)	• Provide written feedback for midterm evaluation • Schedule meeting with student to review midterm evaluation • Gradually increase student responsibility (e.g, lead small/large group activities) • Support curriculum planning •	• Conduct one (1) informal observation (30-45 mins) • Provide feedback using pre-observation form (student) and informal observation form (supervisor) • Debrief with student (15 mins) • Highlight strengths and support goal setting • Review and grade midterm dispositions evaluation • Upload graded forms to Canvas • Support curriculum planning
Weeks	Student Teacher	Mentor Teacher	University Supervisor

9 - 10 <i>Curriculum Planning</i>	• Gradually increase teaching role (e.g., implementing observed teaching strategies, supporting conflict resolution, leading transitions) • Develop lesson plans • Share drafts with MT, request specific feedback • Submit curriculum plan draft to course instructor for feedback and approval • Prepare materials for implementation • Coordinate with university supervisor and MT to schedule formal observations • Send approved plans to MT and the university supervisor (Canvas) two days before implementation	• Gradually increase student responsibility (e.g., supporting conflict resolution, leading transitions) • Invite student to applicable staff, parent, or professional development meetings • Provide weekly feedback on performance, progress, and learning goals • Review lesson plan drafts and provide feedback • Support student preparation for implementation	• Review approved curriculum plans in Canvas • Schedule two (2) formal observation visits between weeks 11-15
Weeks	Student Teacher	Mentor Teacher	University Supervisor

11 – 15*Implement Activities*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to assume classroom routine and responsibility.• Implement a total of three (3) approved lessons, two (2) with university supervisor, one (1) with MT• Reflect on feedback to prepare for the next activity• Complete final disposition self-evaluation• Plan your exit. Talk with MT about how to say goodbye to children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide weekly feedback on performance, progress, and learning goals• Support implementation• Observe and provide feedback for one (1) of the three (3) lesson plans being implemented• Provide written feedback for final disposition evaluation• Schedule meeting with student to review final evaluation• Support student in planning their goodbye to children | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct two (2) formal observations• Evaluate performance using formal observation forms.• Debrief with student (15 mins)• Highlight student growth• Review and grade final dispositions evaluation• Upload graded forms to Canvas |
|--|---|---|

Thank you for your commitment to mentor our student teachers!



*Waiver: The contents of the handbook are subject to change.