

Protocol for Accepting Student Interns

Background:

Due to geographical location and the ability to provide supervision by a director of student teaching, Polk County Public Schools currently collaborates with four major local colleges and universities that serve the greater Polk County area for the purpose of hosting student interns. These four local college and university education programs are represented by the University of South Florida (USF), Florida Southern College, Warner Southern College, and Southeastern University.

Polk County Schools collaborates with other state college and university programs for the placement of student interns. These institutes of higher education historically place few students from their degreed programs, and offer the same local supervision and representation from their college of education. These schools include Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Ana G. Mendez University, University of Florida, University of Central Florida, Webster University, and Florida State University.

An increasing number of requests for accepting on-line university students, as well as out-of state students for their final internship, prompted the need for an internal policy for accepting student interns. To insure a quality internship that includes direct supervision from an accredited college or university, a committee of the following gathered to form an in-house protocol for their prospective programs:

Wes Bridges II, Esquire - General Counsel
Chris Laney - Para-Legal
Wilson P. Strouse - Director, Professional Development
Annette Campbell – Sr. Coordinator, Teacher Professional Development
Donna Wingard- Director, Teacher Certification
Lois Schuck – Sr. Coordinator, Teacher Certification
Linda Troupe - Director, Student Services
Kay Noble – Resource Counselor Specialist

Concerns:

1. It is more difficult to place interns with an increasing population of non-education majors and non-tenured teachers in our district. The district has estimated that 30% of their teaching staff has less than three years of teaching experience; one of the requirements needed in order to supervise a student teacher.
2. On-line and out of state universities do not consistently offer direct supervision of student teachers and the quality of programs often varies.
3. There is a significant discrepancy as to the compensation that is given to the supervising teacher from the universities/colleges.



Outcomes:

In order to be consistent with the excellent teaching qualifications established via policy for Polk County Schools' teaching applicants, an internal protocol for accepting student interns has been drafted. The following items outline the necessary requirements for student intern placements with Polk County Schools.

Applicants who wish to complete their student teaching requirements must be able to:

- Verify that upon completion of the internship program, the student will be issued a standard state teaching certificate.
- Verify a passing score on the General Knowledge Test (GKT), Florida Subject Area Examination and the Professional Education Examination prior to an intern placement. [The passing of the Florida Subject Area Examination would, under hardship scenarios, be allowed during the internship as part of university/college graduation requirements.]

With a degree from an accredited college, these three tests, and student teaching, an intern would qualify for a Florida Professional Certificate upon completion of the program and be eligible for employment.

In addition to the state certification examination requirements, it is **imperative** that the overseeing college/university provide appropriate supervision of the internship.

According to Florida Statute 1004.04 which establishes teacher preparation programs for postsecondary schools, colleges must go through an elaborate approval process with continuing program approval by DOE that gives college student interns real job experience. In particular, as it applies to PCSB, Paragraph (6) states:

(6) PRE-SERVICE FIELD EXPERIENCE.--All postsecondary instructors, school district personnel and instructional personnel, and school sites preparing instructional personnel through preservice field experience courses and internships shall meet special requirements. District school boards are authorized to pay student teachers during their internships.

(a) **All instructors in postsecondary teacher preparation programs** who instruct or supervise pre-service field experience courses or internships shall have at least one of the following: specialized training in clinical supervision; a valid professional teaching certificate pursuant to ss. 1012.56 and 1012.585; or at least 3 years of successful teaching experience in prekindergarten through grade 12.



(b) All school district personnel and instructional personnel who supervise or direct teacher preparation students during field experience courses or internships must have evidence of "clinical educator" training and must successfully demonstrate effective classroom management strategies that consistently result in improved student performance. The State Board of Education shall approve the training requirements.

(c) Pre-service field experience programs must provide specific guidance and demonstration of effective classroom management strategies, strategies for incorporating technology into classroom instruction, strategies for incorporating scientifically researched, knowledge-based reading literacy and computational skills acquisition into classroom instruction, and ways to link instructional plans to the Sunshine State Standards, as appropriate. The length of structured field experiences may be extended to ensure that candidates achieve the competencies needed to meet certification requirements.

(d) Postsecondary teacher preparation programs in cooperation with district school boards and approved private school associations shall select the school sites for pre-service field experience activities. These sites must represent the full spectrum of school communities, including, but not limited to, schools located in urban settings. In order to be selected, school sites must demonstrate commitment to the education of public school students and to the preparation of future teachers.

Conclusion:

In order to ensure a successful internship experience, it is imperative that the cooperating colleges and universities:

- Provide a representative who will actively supervise the student intern in a timely manner.
- Provide a method of monitoring the completion of the necessary background checks and fingerprinting with Polk County Schools per the Jessica Lunsford Act in cooperation with the Safe Schools Department and Professional Development.
- Ensure that all prerequisite intern examinations are completed before placement.
- Provide the Polk County Schools Intern Placement Coordinator with the applications for placement a minimum of six weeks prior to the anticipated placement date.
- Offer a meaningful incentive to the school board employee who supervises the student intern.



- Student interns shall not be used as substitutes for classroom teachers. Student teachers have no substitute training nor hold teacher certification, and could subject the school to liability.

[Online University programs will be evaluated on their ability to offer a quality program that meets state certification requirements and the district's expectations as outlined in this policy.]

The Florida Legislature clearly describes the process for teacher preparation and directs PCSB to abide by the pre-service field experience requirements when hosting student interns. Polk County Schools Professional Development Department provides the necessary clinical supervision professional development opportunities for supervising teachers and maintains a process for teacher recommendations for intern supervision. School site selection represents the total school population of Polk County students and offers a wide variety of placement opportunities for directors of student teachers.

Polk County Schools recognizes the value of student teaching programs and welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with state colleges and universities to provide a positive student teaching experience within the expectations and parameters as described above.

