What Does a Good Mentor Teacher Do?

The Earlham M.A.T. program enjoys a cohort model that emphasizes fusing theory and practice. Rather than ask students to take a series of courses and then student teach, we ask students to do both at once with M.A.T course work closely linked to the practicum. We believe this model prepares M.A.T. candidates well.

Candidates begin in schools with their mentor teachers in August on the first day of teacher in-service and remain there until almost the end of the school year. They become members of the staff, included in all facets of the mentor teacher’s daily life. The candidates are expected to accompany their mentor teacher to all school meetings, team meetings, student conferences, and assist with any extra duties. In this way, the candidates will have total immersion in the school and life of a classroom teacher.

Reflective Role throughout the M.A.T. Program

Reflection. We ask you to be reflective with the candidates. Provide multiple opportunities for your candidate to see into your mind. They will want to think with you about your reflections—about the M.A.T. conceptual framework, about your “stance” to use Robert Fried’s term, about your approach(es) to diversity and diverse students, your use of technology, creating a community of learners in the classroom, and other similar topics.

In summer, you will begin to think about how you will work with the student teacher; during the June and July Trainings, you will personally review and reflect over material provided by the M.A.T.

In the fall, after the initial acclimation to the school year, we encourage regular reflective meetings to go over mentor and future intern practice. During the Fall as a mentor, you should articulate the purposes underlying your practice and help the intern reflect about the nature of teaching and learning.

Reflective practice is extremely important for student teachers to become professionals. As the interns transition into full-time student teaching, that reflection time will change to a focus on student teacher practice. Together, you will discuss what both of you are seeing in their teaching and student understanding.

Role and Responsibilities—Summer

1. Workshop. Attend the workshop to find out more about the program and how to be a good mentor.

2. Contact. Meet your student teacher and begin to build a professional relationship.

3. Reflection. Begin to think about how to work with the student teacher during the fall semester (how to involve her in authentic ways, how to work collaboratively with her, how to help her see into your mind as you work and reflect, how to give her experiences that will prepare her for the spring semester…)
4. **Basic information.** Exchange relevant contact information (phone and e-mail) with your candidate. Provide your student teacher with a copy of all school policies, mission statement, and guidelines. Also please provide your candidate with copies of textbooks and other relevant teaching materials that he will need during the fall semester.

**Role and Responsibilities—Fall**

1. **First weeks of school.** During the first weeks, we expect to let you and your M.A.T. candidate become acclimated to the new school year. Debbie, Randy, and Becky do not expect to visit your class or school unless a specific need arises. We will begin to meet with you and the candidate individually after the first weeks to review the portfolio, performance assessment, the conceptual framework, the work sample, the action research project, as well as national and state teaching standards (INTASC principles and IPSB standards especially).

2. **Reflective Meetings.** As described above you will meet often to reflect on those experiences and the practice that takes place in your classroom. Fall emphasis will be on mentor practice and pedagogy.

3. **Teaching evaluation.**
   a) All teaching evaluation forms (of candidates) are based on Indiana State standards and the M.A.T. conceptual framework. During the fall, formally evaluate your candidate’s teaching of a class at least twice. (Sample in the Mentor Teacher Handbook.) Most likely, this will occur during the work sample that the candidate teaches for 1-3 weeks, but other times are possible. **Frequent informal evaluations are strongly encouraged.**
   b) At the end of semester, complete a formative evaluation in cooperation with the M.A.T. faculty supervisor and candidate. (Sample in the Mentor Teacher Handbook.)

4. **Triangulation.** We will provide support for you in your classroom in assessing candidates with the student-teaching observation sheets. The goal is to make sure that mentor teachers and supervising professors recognize the same strengths and weaknesses in the candidate’s teaching.

5. **Teaching.** During fall, please allow the candidate to work with you in all aspects of teaching—everything except full-time teaching. Thus, the candidate can and should observe, tutor, team with you in teaching a lesson, lead a discussion, and learn all school resources including counselors, special education teachers, librarians, a/v department, and technology.

6. **Balance.** We also ask you to allow the candidates to try lots of possibilities in their teaching. As long as your candidate’s ideas are reasonable, encourage them—but discourage her from getting in over her head. Candidates have classes at Earlham for three afternoons per week; they also have some reading and papers
(all connected to their fall teaching) to write. Balancing the workload will require judgment; please feel free to consult with M.A.T. faculty.

7. **Work sample.** Help your candidates schedule a time to teach a “work sample” during one class (time and content to be determined in consultation with you) over a period of 1-3 weeks. We will provide candidates with guidelines for the work sample; you already have them in your Mentor Teacher Handbook. Before your candidate teaches a work sample, help him to devise lesson and unit plans. (Please refer to M.A.T. guidelines on lesson and unit plans.)

8. **Action research project.** We expect candidates to undertake an action research project that will be started in the fall and completed in the spring. We hope you will provide guidance and ideas on issues or questions that are important to your classroom or department that need research. We will provide candidates with guidelines for the action research project.

9. **Transition plan.** In November or early December, plan how the candidate will transition into full time student teaching in the first weeks of January.

10. **Observations.** Help your candidate arrange observations in your school so that she can discern a larger context for education (other classrooms, counselor, social worker, secretary, custodian, PTO representative, other grade level/building teacher.).

**Role and Responsibilities—Spring**

1. **Feedback.** Give clear, concise feedback to candidates as they begin their full-time teaching experience. How do I give feedback that will improve the candidate’s performance? Much of that feedback can be given during the Mentor/Intern **Reflective meetings** which take place regularly.

2. **Collaboration.** Decide on how to work collaboratively at times, especially at the beginning and end of the candidate’s teaching experience.

3. **Program requirements.** Work with the college supervisor to be certain the candidate fulfills all the program requirements for student teaching.

4. **Mid-semestere formative evaluation.** Complete mid-semestere formative evaluation in co-operation with M.A.T. faculty to help the candidate be on track for successful completion of student teaching.

5. **Formal teaching evaluations.** Complete a minimum of one formal evaluation each month during the semester.

6. **Action research.** Continue to give guidance to the candidate on her action research.
7. **Summative evaluation.** Complete an end of student teaching summative evaluation in co-operation with the M.A.T. faculty supervisor and candidate.

8. **Communication.** M.A.T. faculty will meet individually with mentor teachers to discuss the student teacher. Do not hesitate to call or e-mail if you have concerns warranting faculty attention.

**NOTES or QUESTIONS:**