

**GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS COMMISSION
GUIDANCE FOR TRADITIONAL
FIELD AND CLINICAL
EXPERIENCES FOR ACADEMIC
YEAR 2021-2022**

Revised, August 2021

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Context

The work that pre-service candidates do as they observe exceptional teachers and practice their own instructional strategies is key to the development of the next generation of outstanding teachers. However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to alter the opportunities Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) and their candidates typically have to work in traditional P-12 environments.

In August 2020, the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Department of Public Health jointly released [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#). The document provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful academic year. In it, three possible scenarios are described for school districts, with variations for each:



Traditional face-to-face structure for instruction with modified social distancing and cleaning practices in place.

Blend of remote and in-person instruction (e.g., limited/staggered use of school buildings).

Fully remote learning structure, particularly if there is a resurgence of COVID-19.

Because the guidance is not mandated, and local school districts have the authority and flexibility to select the scenario that meets their own individual needs, EPPs must consider all of the alternatives to traditional face-to-face field and clinical experiences. Provided in the following sections is guidance for adjusting clinical experiences and field experiences for Academic Year 2021-22, as well as expectations for clinical supervision and partnerships.

The term used to describe the culminating experience, clinical practice, is also referred to as student teaching or internship, and those terms are used interchangeably throughout this document. The term field experiences refers to the experiences occurring prior to clinical practice.

Clinical Practice

In the event that partnering school districts offer traditional instruction for their P-12 students, but limit the number of teacher candidates to be placed in schools, the priority will be face-to-face experiences for those completing student teaching.

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01, Requirements for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Programs](#), states that “teacher candidates must spend a minimum of one full semester or the equivalent in residencies or internships” (2021, p. 15), and a year-long residency is preferable. Many EPPs currently require year-long residencies for their teacher candidates, and leadership and service field programs require significant time in job-embedded or school and/or district clinical placements. To adjust for P-12 clinical placement limitations due to COVID-19, EPPs should consider the following options.

For Academic Year 2021-2022, the following allowances will be made for those who are completing clinical practice:

- Candidates will work with their assigned cooperating teacher (or mentor for service/leadership programs), participating in all of the activities he/she does. If school is meeting face-to-face, the clinical practice educator will complete the clinical practice experience in a face-to-face format. If the school is using remote learning for instruction, candidates will complete all requirements in virtual settings.
 - Note that candidates completing clinical practice in a face-to-face setting may be required to sign a daily disclaimer, participate in testing, temperature checks, wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and complete all additional requirements outlined by the school district.
- While one full semester of student teaching is required for completing a teacher preparation program, there may be instances where candidates are simply unable to complete all of the hours equivalent to one full semester. At a minimum, EPPs must assert that candidates who complete clinical practice in Academic Year 2021-2022 have spent as much time as feasible and a minimum of one half of the semester with a cooperating teacher in either a traditional or virtual format.
- If an EPP’s school partners are unable to accommodate all clinical practice candidates for Academic Year 2021-2022, EPPs must develop innovative ways for those candidates to meet all of the learning objectives for clinical practice. For instance, EPPs might consider providing a hybrid student teaching experience. Clinical practice candidates might spend part of the semester completing additional field experience work (see suggestions below) and spend the rest of the semester with a cooperating teacher.



- Innovation is encouraged. Clinical practice candidates might serve as substitute teachers, teachers of record (where allowed), or in other roles that allow them to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected by program completion. In addition, clinical practice candidates may need to engage in a broader set of experiences than is traditionally expected. These might include researching virtual learning strategies, collaborating with cooperating teachers to structure learning experiences, and conducting family outreach and engagement. For instance, clinical practice candidates might create weekly family newsletters or compile recommended activities for families to support student learning at home. Clinical practice candidates should also participate in all ongoing professional learning provided to support educators, even if those experiences are offered virtually.

The most important factor in all of the scenarios above is that the EPP must be able to evaluate candidates' abilities to assess, plan, and instruct. This includes candidates' abilities to effectively implement classroom management strategies.

If a school district remains open, and clinical practice candidates are displaced because the EPP's campus closes, EPPs have the flexibility to decide how those individuals will meet all of the learning objectives for clinical practice. EPPs may need to re-place clinical practice educators with a different cooperating teacher, if necessary, to ensure that teacher candidates are effectively prepared.

Field Experiences

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) states that candidates must “complete field experiences that include organized and sequenced engagement...in settings providing them with opportunities to observe, practice, and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions delineated in all applicable institutional, state, and national standards. The experiences must be systematically designed and sequenced to increase the complexity and levels of engagement with



which candidates apply, reflect upon, and expand their knowledge and skills. Since observation is a less rigorous method of learning, emphasis should be on field experience sequences requiring active professional practice or demonstration and including substantive work with B/P-12 students or B/P-12 personnel as appropriate depending upon the preparation program” (2021, p. 14).

Although field experiences are foundational for future teachers, during Academic Year 2021-2022, EPPs must place the highest priority on assigning *clinical practice candidates* to cooperating teachers. If partner districts are unable to host both field experience and clinical practice candidates in Academic Year 2021-2022, candidates needing clinical practice must be placed first and those who need field experiences will need to complete field experience learning objectives through some other innovative approach.

EPPs must place the highest priority on assigning clinical practice candidates to cooperating teachers.

Field experience candidates might fulfill required expectations by observing and completing activities with videos recorded by exceptional teachers. With any of the video suggestions listed below, EPPs must be very specific about what is expected of candidates in relation to the videos. For instance, candidates might be required to watch for specific pedagogical skills and strategies, document them, and reflect on how they might incorporate them into their own practices with a variety of learners. See the links below for suggestions.

- The [ATLAS \(Accomplished Teaching, Learning, and Schools\) Library](#), produced by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is currently used by 20 traditional preparation providers in Georgia. At this time, the cost of an ATLAS subscription for 50 candidates is \$2,000 for one year. Given the current challenges due to the pandemic, ATLAS is offering a six-month subscription option in addition to the one-year and three-year options. A 6-month subscription costs \$1,000 for 50 users. The subscription includes:
 - Access to over 1,400 video cases. The video cases are indexed to up to 9 standards and frameworks including National Board Standards, edTPA, InTASC, High Leverage Practices, Common Core Mathematics, Common Core English Language Arts/Literacy, Next Generation Science, and Deeper Learning; and
 - A webinar training provided by the National Board.

When you study great teachers...you will learn much more from their caring and hard work than from their style.

William Glasser

- [Lipscomb University](#) offers a set of videos. Each candidate will need to create an account, but the account is free.
- [Achieve the Core](#) also offers teaching videos, and they provide supplemental materials, such as lesson plans, a class profile, and student worksamples.
- [The Teacher Toolkit](#) is another site that offers videos and supplemental materials.
- There are also “Plug and Plays” (video examples) that come with the book [Teach Like a Champion](#).

In addition to video observations and responses, field experience candidates might practice teaching with avatars. Some EPPs have already begun using Artificial Intelligence software for field experiences, particularly those for the foundational education classes (i.e., Area F courses).

EPPs that require in-person field experiences for foundational education/Area F courses should consider alternative arrangements (like those listed above) during Academic year 2021-2022, so the emphasis can remain on those completing clinical practice.

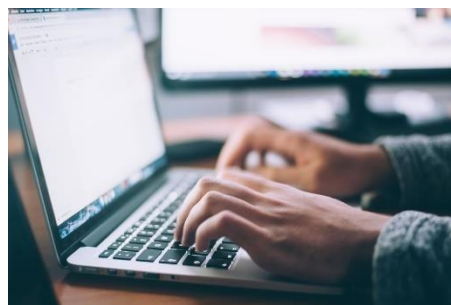
For Academic Year 2021-2022, EPPs might consider allowing candidates to complete field experiences in a setting other than a P-12 school, such as a boys and girls club or a church setting. Because of the importance of training future teachers in classroom management, traditional EPPs will want to look for opportunities for candidates to practice those skills in a variety of settings. Community settings might be excellent places to practice classroom management techniques and complete related assignments.

EPPs offering programs that are nationally accredited may need to review additional information provided by the individual accrediting bodies. For instance, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs has specific requirements for School Counseling programs ([CACREP Accommodations for Practicum and Internship](#)).

Field and Clinical Experiences in a Virtual Environment

The best scenario for teacher preparation candidates to complete the student teaching/clinical practice experience is in a face-to-face setting. Where at all possible, candidates should complete clinical practice in person with P-12 students. If an in-person clinical practice experience is established, and candidates are unable to complete that face-to-face experience due to a COVID-19 outbreak, or if all of an EPP's partners offer only virtual schooling options, a virtual clinical experience may be the only option and the EPP will determine if the clinical practice experience meets program completion requirements.

Since the original publication of this guidance document, additional questions have arisen regarding candidates who complete clinical and field experiences in a virtual environment. Due to the continued uncertainty of the effects of COVID-19 on educator preparation, it is unlikely that this document provides guidance for all unusual circumstances that might occur; however, this section provides parameters for distance learning scenarios.



For Academic Year 2021-2022, the following allowances are available for those who are completing clinical practice (student teaching/internship) in a virtual setting:

- While completing almost all of clinical practice with a full classroom of students is ideal, virtual learning experiences may alter what occurs this academic year. A portion of a candidate's experience might include small group instruction and there might be limited occasions for a candidate to instruct an individual student. Clinical practice experiences have always included

some instruction for individual students; however, those experiences have not occurred outside of the school building, and virtual settings present unique concerns.

- To protect candidates who are completing clinical practice in a virtual setting, EPPs might consider requiring candidates to record virtual sessions with individual students. (EPPs will need to adhere to partner schools' policies regarding recording virtual sessions.) If requested, login credentials for virtual sessions should be made available to cooperating teachers and college supervisors.
- EPPs might also require candidates to keep a log of all activities, particularly those that involve one-on-one instruction. It will be important for college supervisors to review those activities to ensure that the candidate is participating in a variety of experiences.
- Because each school district has its own guidance regarding legal issues and confidentiality of data, EPPs and candidates should follow the guidance provided by their partner schools/districts. At a minimum, EPPs are responsible for making candidates aware that all student data are confidential. EPPs might consider requiring candidates to complete the confidentiality and FERPA training provided by partner districts.

For Academic Year 2021-2022, the following guidance applies to field experiences (e.g., practica prior to clinical practice):

- [Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) states, "GaPSC-approved EPPs shall ensure candidates complete **supervised field experiences** consistent with the grade levels of certification sought." (2021, p. 14). For this academic year, because field experiences may occur outside the ideal P-12 school setting (as described on page 4 of this document), an EPP supervisor may fulfill the supervisory role.
- Although completing field experiences in a P-12 school is ideal, it is acceptable for candidates to work with students in a variety of settings. For example:
 - EPPs may arrange for candidates to provide instruction for homeschooled students in order to complete field experience requirements.
 - At the request of students' parents/guardians, EPPs might also arrange a less formal setting with students who are attending their P-12 school virtually and could benefit from additional instruction.

Additional Resources for Working with Students in a Virtual Environment

Because many teacher candidates may be teaching in a distance learning environment, EPPs may find the following resources helpful:

- The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) offers [online faculty development courses](#) for P-12 teachers related to effective online instruction, and teacher candidates are allowed to complete those. GaDOE also offers [FIP \(Formative Instructional Practices\) modules](#) as a resource for faculty and students. Contact your EPP Head to obtain the access code.

- The [State Educational Technology Directors Association \(SETDA\)](#) has a page dedicated to the [eLearning Coalition](#), with resources for teachers, parents, and students, including vetted digital content. SETDA also offers [resources](#) specific to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- The [Center on Great Teachers and Leaders](#) offers many helpful resources, including ones specific to teaching English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Grade Band Requirements

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) states, “...candidates must complete supervised field experiences consistent with the grade levels of certification sought” (2021, p. 14). For each certification type, these grade bands include:

- Birth-Kindergarten: ages 0-2, ages 3-4, Kindergarten
- Elementary: PK-K, 1-3, 4-5
- Middle grades: 4-5, 6-8
- Secondary: 6-8, 9-12
- P-12 fields: P-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12



Candidates enrolled in preparation programs during the COVID-19 pandemic may not be able to participate in a field experience with a cooperating teacher at every level. However, the suggestions offered in the *Field Experiences* section above may help EPPs ensure candidates have the opportunity to participate in meaningful observations in all required grade levels.

Supervision of Candidates

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) states, “B/P-12 educators who supervise candidates (mentors, cooperating teachers, leadership coaches/mentors, service field supervisors) in residencies or internships at Georgia schools shall meet” specific requirements (2021, p. 15). These requirements include three years of successful experience in the field in which the candidate is seeking certification. In addition, pages 11 and 12 of the [Guidance for Interpreting and Implementing Rule 505-3-.01](#), as well as Appendix C, which begins on page 51 of that document, provide additional information about the expectations for the qualifications and certification of those who supervise clinical experience candidates.

EPPs must place the highest priority on assigning clinical practice candidates to cooperating teachers.

When selecting cooperating teachers/mentors for clinical practice candidates, EPPs are expected to adhere to requirements and guidance as closely as possible. However, as described in the next section, partnerships are the key to this work. As a reminder, the [Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) explains that Partnership Agreements between the EPP and the partnering districts will include a statement that the principal or employer will assure that educators selected for the supervision of residencies/internships are the best qualified for that role. (2021)

Regarding observations of clinical practice: Many EPPs observe their candidates every other week or more. If faculty supervisors are not allowed in the building as “guests,” providers will need to explore virtual options for observing and providing feedback to clinical practice candidates. These may include joining live virtual teaching sessions and reviewing recorded ones.

Partnerships Are Essential

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01](#) states, “Effective partnerships with B/P-12 schools and/or school districts are central to the preparation of educators. At a minimum, GaPSC-approved EPPs shall establish and maintain collaborative relationships with B/P-12 schools, which are formalized as partnerships and focused on continuous school improvement and student growth and learning through the preparation of candidates, support of induction phase educators, and professional development of B/P-20 educators. EPPs are encouraged to establish and sustain partnerships meeting higher levels of effectiveness” (2021, p. 14).

Particularly as pandemic-related school disruptions continue, EPPs may seek to maximize their partnerships and relationships with local school officials by helping them realize the benefits of hosting clinical practice and field experience candidates. COVID-19 has significantly impacted the learning of all P-12 students, and teacher candidates who participate in student teaching or field experiences can provide scaffolded support and assistance for those students who need it most (one-on-one, in small groups, in large groups, in person, or virtual). Clinical practice candidates can serve as a significant asset

to schools where teachers are concerned about health risks (or if teachers become ill).

COVID-19 also considerably impacted the training of those who were student teaching during the spring of 2020. EPPs might consider expanding existing partnerships to support newly hired, first-year teachers, as they will need more support than typical induction-phase educators.



EPPs might also offer virtual Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) comprised of former candidates who are now teaching who might be willing to lend support to current student teachers or field placement candidates through conversations about experiences.

The success of the suggested strategies identified above will depend on the development and ongoing maintenance of deep partnerships with local districts. During recent program approval reviews, EPPs have demonstrated many strengths in *Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice*, and those strengths are due to strong P-12 partnerships. Although GaPSC has specified expectations and provided guidance for Standard 2, EPPs have been innovative in their approach to meeting Standard 2. EPPs now need to leverage those partnerships and maximize the benefits for teacher candidates and for local P-12 schools and students.

Closing

No *in-school* intervention has a greater impact on student learning than an effective teacher—one who is strong in both content and pedagogy. While our current circumstances require EPPs to create innovative methods for teacher candidates to complete field experiences and clinical practice, our goal must remain focused on preparing educators who are classroom ready for their assignments on Day One. This time in our history calls for EPPs and school districts to come together and collaboratively provide the best preparation experiences for all future teachers.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller
