



# **GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMISSION GUIDE BOOK FOR TRADITIONAL FIELD AND CLINICAL EXPERIENCES**

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## Context

The work that pre-service candidates do as they observe exceptional teachers and practice their own instructional strategies is essential to their development as educators.

This guidebook is provided to assist Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) as they deploy pre-service candidates into the field to fulfill field and clinical practices. Clinical placements in accordance with Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) rules and policies can present unique challenges for EPPs and the candidates they prepare. This guidebook is designed to supplement the rules and policies specific to Field and Clinical Practice inherent in **505-3-.01 REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR APPROVING EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROVIDERS AND EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS**.

GaPSC staff are always available to respond to questions and address the concerns of approved and accepted providers in Georgia. We think you will find this guidebook a practical resource for consultation and reference of requirements, expectations, and best practices for assuring candidates are successful during their field and clinical experiences.

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*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, once a candidate is admitted and enrolled in the EPP.*

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**Important:** This guidance document for clinical practice begins with the Pre-Service Certificate. Candidates must not begin field experiences until the Pre-Service Certificate is obtained; therefore, it should be in place well before clinical practice begins.

## The Pre-Service Certificate

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01, Requirements for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Programs](#), states that “candidates of GaPSC-approved EPPs must meet all applicable Pre-Service Certificate requirements, regardless of clinical practice placement location” (2024, p. 15). The Pre-Service Certificate provides a statewide structure for assuring the safety of P-12 children in Georgia’s schools. The Pre-Service Certificate was designed to:

- Assure the safety of school children;
- Provide opportunities for pre-service candidates to practice/demonstrate knowledge and skills;
- Standardize the criminal history background check process across the state for pre-service candidates, eliminating those who are not eligible or suited to the profession; and
- Assist pre-service candidates in understanding the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators and holding them accountable under the Code.

The attainment of the [Pre-Service Certificate](#) is required for anyone participating in field experiences and student teaching in Georgia schools (to include candidates in Georgia who are enrolled in out-of-state programs). The EPP must ensure that all candidates who are completing field experiences and clinical practice in Georgia schools hold a Pre-Service Certificate unless they hold a teaching certificate issued by GaPSC. Certification will be delayed or denied for any candidate who does not hold the Pre-Service Certificate during field and clinical experiences. In addition, the candidate may be required to repeat student teaching.

## 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” (2024, p. 14).

Although field experiences are foundational for future teachers, they are no less important, and can be great opportunities for candidates to experience varying classroom and/or instructional experiences. EPPs can use field experiences to diversify experiences for candidates in different classroom settings, in different grade levels, and in different learning environments, especially as related to certain special education fields.

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*EPPs must place the highest priority on field and clinical experiences for candidates.*

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Field experience candidates might fulfill required expectations by observing, analyzing, and completing activities with videos of exemplary classroom practice in a variety of settings. 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.
  - Access to over 1,400 video cases. The video cases are indexed to up to nine standards and frameworks including National Board Standards, 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

- [Achieve the Core](#) also offers teaching videos, and they provide supplemental materials, such as lesson plans, a class profile, and student work samples.
- [Mursion Software](#)
- <https://www.theteachertoolkit.com/> is another site that offers videos and supplemental materials.
- There are also “Plug and Plays” (video examples) that come with the book [Plug and Plays | Teach Like a Champion](#).

### **Other Considerations for Field Experiences:**

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).

Field experiences can serve as great opportunities for candidates to experience high-impact practices, including service-learning or community-based projects. EPPs might consider allowing candidates to complete field experiences in a setting other than a P-12 school, such as a Boys and Girls Clubs of America, or a community setting. Because of the importance of preparing 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. These opportunities might also allow for deeper self-reflection regarding genuine desire to have a career in a profession that is regarded as altruistic.

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](#)).

## **Clinical Practice/Internships**

[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” (2024, 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. Although year-long residencies/internships are recognized as most effective, teacher candidates must spend a minimum of one (1) full semester or the equivalent in student teaching/clinical practice. While this requirement is the minimum expectation, certain preparation programs require additional clinical practice, residency, or internship hours. It is important that the EPP refer to the [GaPSC - Educator Preparation Rules](#) specific to its educator preparation program offering to assure candidates fulfill the required hours as specified in the rule.

### **TPMS Entry for Clinical Practice Hours**

One full semester is 15 weeks (5 days a week, 8 hours a day), which totals 600 hours. For reporting in TPMS, the total hours has been reduced by 100 hours to account for school breaks, holidays, and illness.

### **TPMS Reporting Deadlines**

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01, Requirements for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Programs](#) specifies that data must be entered in two TPMS fields--Clinical Practice Beginning Date and Cooperating Teacher Cert ID--by September 30 (Fall semester) and February 28 (Spring semester). These fields apply to those candidates participating in their culminating clinical practice (including those who are employed while in your program), and the reporting deadlines are effective immediately (paragraph

(3) (c) 8. (ii), p. 9). Aimed at preventing problems at the point of program completion that delay certification, this information will be monitored and used to inform you of any actions needed to ensure candidates are properly placed and credentialed.

### **Placements and Mentors**

[Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.01, Requirements for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Programs](#) states that “clinical practice for all fields must occur in regionally accredited public schools, charter schools approved by the Georgia State Charter School Commission, charter schools approved by the Georgia Department of Education, out-of-state charter schools approved by the state’s charter schools commission or department of education, private schools accredited by a GaPSC-accepted accreditor, Department of Defense schools, or in international settings meeting accreditation criteria specified in GaPSC Rule 505-2-.31 GAPSC ACCEPTED ACCREDITATION; VALIDATION OF NON-ACCREDITED DEGREES”. (2024, page 15)

In addition, mentor teachers must have three years of teaching, leader or service experience. To investigate appropriately accredited schools, use the resources listed here:

- [Cognia - Accreditation Registry Search](#).
- Charter School Commission: [Approved Charter Contracts | State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia](#).

### **Other Considerations for Clinical Practice:**

- When considering the clinical practice experiences in which candidates engage, EPPs should think in terms of what is the best preparation for the candidate, and should assure that the candidate receives the most ideal, most realistic, and most relevant experience to adequately prepare the candidate for the classroom.
- Innovation is encouraged in the clinical practice experience. 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.
- For Masters of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) candidates who are employed, their teaching assignment is their clinical practice requirement. Field experiences in other grade bands for the certification program will take place outside of their teaching assignment.

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.

## Field and Clinical Experiences in a Virtual Environment

The best scenario and the best preparation for teacher 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 school or district closures, natural disasters, global pandemics, school emergencies, school lock-downs, school tech days, school remote learning days, etc., 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. Again, the EPP should make the determination for the placement of candidates based on the rationale of "best preparation."

It is unlikely that this document provides guidance for all unusual circumstances that might occur with a candidate, EPP, P-12 school setting, or other life circumstances; however, this section provides some parameters for distance learning scenarios.

- While completing almost all of clinical practice with a full classroom of students is ideal, virtual learning experiences may yield more flexibility for a candidate's ability to complete field experiences. 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.
- [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).

## Additional Resources for Working with Students in a Virtual Environment

To assist pre-service candidates working with students in virtual environments, 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 [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 \(SETDA\)](#) page dedicated to the [eLearning Coalition](#), features 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 those 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” (2024, p. 15). For each certification type, these grade bands include:

Birth-Kindergarten	Elementary	Middle grades	Secondary	P-12 fields
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Ages 0 to 2,</li><li>○ Ages 3 to 4</li><li>○ Kindergarten</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Grades PK-K,</li><li>○ Grades 1-3</li><li>○ Grades 4-5</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Grades 4-5</li><li>○ Grades 6-8</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Grades 6-8</li><li>○ Grades 9-12</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Grades P-2</li><li>○ Grades 3-5,</li><li>○ Grades 6-8</li><li>○ Grades 9-12</li></ul>

## Preparation for Paraprofessionals

When considering the teacher pipeline, paraprofessionals provide great opportunity for insulating the teacher pipeline. Working paraprofessionals may take advantage of virtual field experiences or videos to satisfy some, but not all of their grade band requirements.

## Field and Clinical Experiences for Special Education Fields

Special Education certification fields present unique challenges for field and clinical experiences. Grade band experiences are great opportunities to diversify the candidate’s experience. Candidates being

prepared in Special Education fields should have opportunities to become knowledgeable about and observe characteristics of learners with special needs. Candidates should become knowledgeable about the varying types of assessments of candidates with special needs, particularly which assessments might identify specific behavioral or psychological areas of specific support and/or intervention for the student.

Candidates should be placed in environments where they can observe and learn about Special Education procedures and methodologies. There is not a class size requirement inherent in our educator preparation rules. More importantly, field and clinical experiences should allow for the best preparation of students with varying learning needs. Candidates completing the Special Education General Curriculum/Elementary Education program (Rule 505-3-.56), will complete clinical practice in either a Special Education General Curriculum classroom or an Elementary Classroom. Field experiences within the grade bands will provide an opportunity to ensure the candidate has the appropriate experiences in both fields.

## 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 (2024, p. 15). These requirements include three years of successful experience in the field in which the candidate is seeking certification. In addition, the [Rule 505-3-.01 Guidance and Implementation](#), as well as Appendix C, provide additional information about the expectations for the qualifications and certification of those who supervise clinical experience candidates.

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*EPPs are expected to make every reasonable effort to place candidates with B/P-12 supervisors who hold the same field of certification sought by the candidate.*

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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, [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. (2024)



Regarding observations of clinical practice: Many EPPs observe their candidates every other week or more. Realizing that the global pandemic re-shifted what is acceptable or considered normal/routine

practice, coupled with the precautions related to school safety that many districts and schools have implemented, there may be limitations on the number of guests to a school site. EPPs should work with their school district partners to assure on-site supervision of faculty supervisors to support pre-service candidates during clinical practice.

## **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” (2024, p. 14). EPPs should seek to maximize their partnerships and relationships with local school officials by helping them realize the benefits of hosting pre-service educator preparation candidates for clinical practice and field experiences. Clinical practice candidates can serve as a significant asset to schools. Likewise, schools serve as integral settings for candidates in educator preparation programs.

One example of such a partnership is an Intern to Teacher program. It is designed to provide a year-long teaching experience for a student teacher who is in the final year of a teacher preparation program and performing exceptionally well in all areas. The Intern to Teacher program can help school systems fill teacher vacancies. In one approach, the college/university recommends two Interns (preferably seeking certification in the same content). One Intern fills a vacancy while the other Intern replaces the master teacher, allowing for the master teacher to closely supervise and support both Interns. The Interns are considered teachers of record and are provided compensation by the school district.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Partnerships are essential components of educator preparation. As such, partnerships should be formalized and sustainable. To assure sustainability, EPPs should consider establishing MOUs with their P-12 and community partners. MOUs require a written agreement to protect the interests of both parties, and to assure mutually beneficial P-12 school and community arrangements. MOUs assist partners in establishing a focus on the mission and vision of the partnership; delineate roles, responsibilities, and expectations; identify shared resources to support the work; and in the event it becomes necessary, might provide legal protection for both parties.

### **Other Considerations for Effective Partnerships:**

- EPPs might consider expanding existing partnerships to support newly hired, first year teachers, as they will need more support than typical induction-phase teachers.
- 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. Georgia EPPs have demonstrated many strengths in *Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice* [Georgia Standards for the Approval of Educator Preparation Providers and Educator Preparation Programs](#), 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 should continue to leverage partnerships and maximize the benefits for teacher candidates, as well as for local P-12 schools and students.

### **Clinical Practice allows for Practice**

No *in-school* intervention has a greater impact on student learning than an effective teacher—one who is strong in both content and pedagogy. EPPs are required to assure teacher candidates complete field experiences and clinical practice. The goal must remain focused on the preparation of educators. Field experiences and clinical practice provide the best preparation experiences for future educators.

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