
POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

School of Education
Student Teaching Handbook

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Brief History of the School of Education

In 1963, Point Park College launched its Early Childhood Education Program. The college became Point Park University in 2004 and has continued to expand its offerings to prepare educators for all levels, Pre-K through 12, including special education. The first cohort of doctoral students was admitted in 2014, and the program was formally established as the School of Education on September 5, 2018. Today, the School of Education offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs both online and face-to-face.

Faculty and Staff Directory

A full list of School of Education faculty and staff is available here: [School of Education Faculty and Staff](#).

Applying to Student Teaching and Placement Determination

In the semester before student teaching, candidates receive email instructions for registering in Canvas Student Teaching. All candidates must register, complete the Application for Student Teaching, and submit it in Canvas; applications must be typed and professionally prepared. Candidates are also required to attend a group Zoom meeting with Dr. Pascarella, Director of Student Teaching.

Pre-Student Teaching Requirements

Student teaching is the final semester before graduation. To be approved, candidates must:

- Be admitted to the School of Education (undergraduate candidates only)
- Maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA
- Complete any incomplete coursework from prior semesters and have it converted to a grade
- Register only for Student Teaching Practicum and Seminar, plus at most one additional course, during the student teaching semester

Undergraduate Candidates

Dr. Kelly Pascarella, Director of Student Teaching, secures all undergraduate student teaching placements and assigns each candidate's University Supervisor. All candidates attend an individual meeting with the Director of Student Teaching as part of this process.

Placement Area Selection

- At the initial Student Teaching meeting with Dr. Pascarella, candidates select a preferred placement area within the Greater Pittsburgh region (North, East, South, or West). This selection is final once made.

- Candidates are encouraged to share any professional relationships or school connections developed through prior field experiences that may support a placement.
- If a school district wishes to host a specific candidate, the building principal must submit a formal request by email to Dr. Pascarella at kelly.pascarella@pointpark.edu.
- Dr. Pascarella has final determination over each placement and works to match candidates with cooperating teachers and school settings that support a successful, high-quality experience.

Required Documentation for Placement

Before receiving a placement, candidates must submit the following in Canvas:

- Act 34 – Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Record Check
- Act 151 – Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Department of Human Services)
- Act 114 – FBI Fingerprint-Based Criminal History Clearance
- Act 24 – Arrest/Conviction Self-Reporting Disclosure Form
- Mandated Reporter Training (Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting – Act 126/Act 31)
- TB test results (completed during the School of Education application process)
- Safe Schools Training Certificate through PDE
- Any additional documentation required by the placement school or district

Graduate Candidates

Graduate candidates are responsible for securing their own student teaching placement. The placement must be in the candidate's certification area and must be full-day, full-time for the entire semester.

- Use the verification letter from Point Park University to confirm the candidate's readiness to student teach.
- The placement must be approved by the Director of Student Teaching, who then assigns the University Supervisor.
- Upload the Placement Verification form in Canvas and enter placement details in the placement tracking document.
- Before approval to begin student teaching, submit in Canvas all required items including but not limited to: approved placement information, clearances, TB test results, and Mandated Reporter training documentation.

Student Teaching Abroad

Candidates may choose to complete part of the student teaching semester abroad and should indicate this preference when applying for student teaching. Student teachers who choose this option must complete 30 days of teaching experience in Pennsylvania before completing the remainder of the experience abroad. Contact Dr. Virginia Chambers (vmchambers@pointpark.edu) for more information.

Student Teaching Abroad

Certification Exams

All graduate and undergraduate candidates (PreK–4, grades 4–8, Dance, and Special Education PreK–12) are encouraged to take their certification exams before or during student teaching. To earn the Instructional I certificate, candidates must pass all required exams and then apply through PDE's Teacher Information Management System (TIMS).

Certification Testing Requirements

Accessibility Services

Point Park University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Accommodations are coordinated through the Center for Student Success (5th floor, West Penn Building). It is the student's responsibility to work with the Center for Student Success and share accommodation information with the Director of Student Teaching; accommodations cannot be provided retroactively.

Accessibility Services

School District Policies and Procedures

Point Park's School of Education maintains positive, professional relationships with partner districts. Student teachers and University Supervisors are guests in each building and are expected to follow all district policies and procedures — partnerships that are essential to developing well-prepared future educators.

School District Calendar, Attendance, and Cooperating Teacher's Schedule

Student teachers follow the school district's board-approved calendar, not the university calendar, and are expected to be in school every teacher workday, arriving and departing with their Cooperating Teacher.

Student teachers must maintain a daily attendance card, signed weekly by the Cooperating Teacher and reviewed weekly by the University Supervisor. Any absence must be made up, and the student teacher must notify both the Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor before the start of the school day.

Attendance Card

Clearances, TB Testing, and Other District Requirements

Once a placement is confirmed, the candidate must submit the following to the school district contact listed on the placement form:

- Act 151 Child Abuse Clearance
- Act 34 Criminal Clearance
- Act 114 Fingerprint Clearance
- TB test results, per the district's requirement

- Any other documentation required by the district

Clearances are valid for one year and must remain valid for the entire duration of the placement; they are separate from the clearances submitted to Canvas during placement determination and are provided directly to the district for employment purposes.

[Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse – Mandated Permissive Reporting in PA](#)

[Applying for Clearance Information](#)

Initial Meeting with Cooperating Teacher

The University Supervisor schedules an initial meeting (via Zoom or Microsoft Teams) with the student teacher and Cooperating Teacher to review expectations for student teaching and district requirements. A list of required discussion topics is available in Canvas Student Teaching to ensure consistent information is shared with all parties.

Cooperating Teacher Role

Cooperating Teachers are essential partners in moving student teachers from aspiring educators to novice teachers ready to lead their own classroom. Cooperating Teachers can find supporting documents and a short orientation video at pointpark.edu/coopteachers.

The Cooperating Teacher will:

- Complete a written Weekly Report each Friday, discussing strengths and areas for growth, and provide a copy to the student teacher, who uploads it to Canvas
- Follow the pacing calendar
- Meet with the student teacher each Tuesday to review the next week's lesson plans, then again each Thursday to finalize and approve them
- Provide ongoing verbal feedback
- Keep the University Supervisor informed of the student teacher's progress and alert them to any situations needing immediate attention
- Submit the Check Request form to receive an end-of-semester stipend, sent to kelly.pascarella@pointpark.edu

Student Teacher Role

Student teachers are expected to:

- Follow school district policies, procedures, and calendar, and the Cooperating Teacher's schedule and workday
- Report for all instructional, clerical, and staff development days
- Maintain an attendance card and make up any absences

- Follow the pacing calendar
- Always act professionally and respectfully
- Remain engaged in student learning throughout the instructional day
- Write lesson plans and prepare materials as directed
- Submit all Canvas Practicum assignments on time
- Remember that the Cooperating Teacher is an expert educator and that the student teacher is a guest in the building
- Respond to the University Supervisor within 24 hours

University Supervisor Role

The University Supervisor provides ongoing support so the student teacher continues to grow. Responsibilities include:

- Meeting with the Cooperating Teacher and student teacher for an initial Zoom/Teams meeting to review expectations
- Reviewing weekly Canvas submissions and providing meaningful feedback
- Observing the student teacher at least four times (two before mid-semester, two after), in person or virtually
- Collaborating with the Cooperating Teacher to write the formative mid-semester and final PDE 430, sharing drafts with the Cooperating Teacher before reviewing with the student teacher
- Attending supervisor meetings
- Notifying the Director of Student Teaching of any barriers to the student teacher's success and helping resolve them

Pacing Calendar

Student teachers and Cooperating Teachers use the Point Park pacing calendar as a guide for gradually increasing the student teacher's responsibility until they are teaching a full day independently. Printing the calendar and filling in dates is recommended for easy reference. Calendar links are available in the Canvas Student Teaching shell.

Professional Dress

Student teachers are expected to dress in business or business-casual attire consistent with the host school's professional staff expectations. Confirm dress code expectations with the Cooperating Teacher and follow any district policy; jeans, yoga pants, and sweats are not appropriate. First impressions matter — student teaching is the longest interview of a candidate's career.

Cell Phone Use

Student teachers should share their cell phone number with their Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor to support communication, but should never share it with students or parents, or respond to calls or texts from students. Phones should be turned off during instructional time, and student teachers must follow the district's cell phone policy for professional staff.

Email

Student teachers must check their Point Park email daily and respond within 24 hours. Do not respond to students or parents without first consulting the Cooperating Teacher. If the district issues a temporary email address, use it only for approved school correspondence.

Facebook and Social Networking

As you begin your professional career, review your social media accounts and remove any unprofessional content. Do not friend or connect with students or parents before, during, or after student teaching, and do not post about students, parents, colleagues, or the district. A useful guideline: only share what you would say openly in a classroom with an administrator present. Prospective employers and school administrators frequently review social media, and inappropriate content can affect a placement or future employment.

Athletics, Extracurricular Activities, and Employment During Student Teaching

Student teaching is a full-time professional commitment requiring the candidate's undivided time and significant evening planning and preparation. Student teachers may not adjust their schedule to accommodate athletics, extracurricular activities, or outside employment.

Orientation

Orientation takes place at the start of the student teaching semester. Attendance for the full session is required; orientation reviews expectations for the semester and answers questions so student teachers begin the experience well prepared.

Practicum Canvas Submissions

Each week, by 11:59 p.m. Sunday, student teachers must submit in Canvas:

- Week 1 only: teaching schedule and school calendar in addition to the four weekly requirements:
- The Cooperating Teacher's weekly report for the prior week
- One lesson plan from the prior week with a corresponding reflection
- All lesson plans for the upcoming week
- The attendance card, fully signed by the Cooperating Teacher

Forty-eight hours before a scheduled observation, the student teacher must upload the corresponding lesson plan for the University Supervisor's review. After the observation, the University Supervisor uploads the Lesson Observation Rubric, and later the mid-term and final PDE 430s after reviewing them with the student teacher.

Planning, Preparation, and Instruction

Student teachers meet with their Cooperating Teacher each Tuesday to discuss the coming week's lesson plans, then submit finalized written plans each Thursday for feedback, revision, and approval. All lesson plans must use the Point Park University lesson plan format found in Canvas, which is the sole source of record for the semester's plans. Student teachers may not teach without a Cooperating Teacher-approved lesson plan.

Classroom Environment

Student teachers should build positive, professional relationships with students and keep them engaged for the full instructional period. Behavior management should rely on proximity control and positive reinforcement, following both the Cooperating Teacher's procedures and district policy. A well-developed lesson plan is the foundation of strong classroom management.

Supervision of Students

Students must always be supervised by a school district employee. A student teacher may not be left alone with students unless they hold a university-approved, district-approved substitute teaching permit.

Professionalism

Student teachers are expected to always conduct themselves professionally and adhere to the PA Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators. Behavior deemed unprofessional by the Cooperating Teacher, University Supervisor, Principal, Director of Student Teaching, or Dean of the School of Education may result in removal from the placement and the path to certification.

Student teachers are expected to:

- Take primary responsibility for their own progress
- Maintain open communication with the Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor
- Build positive, professional relationships with school personnel and students
- Follow all school and district policies and procedures
- Always present themselves professionally
- Treat feedback as an opportunity to grow
- Go the extra mile, and thank those who support them
- Come prepared

Evaluation of Student Teachers

Student teachers are evaluated through:

- Weekly Progress Reports and daily verbal feedback from the Cooperating Teacher
- University Supervisor observations, scored with the Lesson Observation Rubric
- A mid-semester and final PDE 430

The final PDE 430 determines the student teaching grade. Candidates must score at least a 1 in each of the four teaching domains to apply for the PA Instructional I certificate. Final grades follow this scale:

- 10–12 points = A
- 7–9 points = B
- 4–6 points = C
- 0–3 points = F

Substitute Teaching While Student Teaching

Student teachers must follow Point Park's Teacher Education Act 91 of 2021 Substitute Teaching While Student Teaching policy. Prior written approval from the Director of Student Teaching is required before substituting, along with submission of a local substitute teaching permit in Canvas Practicum; start by discussing the request with your University Supervisor. Days spent substitute teaching do not count toward the required number of student teaching days.

Seminar

Student teachers register for the Seminar course and are expected to follow its schedule and complete all assignments, including developing and presenting a professional portfolio built from artifacts collected throughout the student teaching experience that align with the four teaching domains. Additional portfolio guidelines are provided in the Seminar course.

Resolving Conflicts

Concerns during the student teaching experience should be addressed promptly, professionally, and collaboratively. All parties are expected to maintain professionalism, confidentiality, respectful communication, and a focus on what best serves students and the learning environment. Student teachers are encouraged to document concerns, communications, and action steps as they arise.

1. Cooperating Teacher first. Address the concern directly and professionally, approaching the conversation with reflection and a willingness to collaborate. Remember that the student teacher is a guest in the classroom, there to learn and grow — most concerns can be resolved through open, respectful conversation at this level.

2. University Supervisor next. If the concern isn't resolved, or more support is needed, contact the University Supervisor, who can facilitate discussion, offer coaching and feedback, observe the situation if needed, and help reach a resolution.
3. Director of Student Teaching. If the concern remains unresolved, email the Director of Student Teaching, who will meet with the parties involved, review documentation, and determine next steps, consulting the Director of Undergraduate Programs or the Chair of the School of Education if needed.

The goal at every step is a quick, collaborative resolution that keeps the student teaching experience productive and successful for everyone involved.

Books, Materials, and Supplies

All district books, materials, and supplies must be returned to the Cooperating Teacher at the end of the placement. Student teachers may be responsible for reimbursing the district for lost or damaged items, and university grades cannot be released until everything is returned.

Dismissal from Student Teaching

The School of Education recognizes that student teaching can be a challenging time, requiring students to balance teaching responsibilities with coursework. If you are struggling, communicate with your supervisor.

If program requirements are not met, your university supervisor will contact you. A meeting will then be held with the student teacher, cooperating teacher, supervisor, and director of student teaching to develop an agreed-upon improvement plan. Failure to comply with this plan may result in dismissal from student teaching.

Weekly requirements must be submitted to Canvas on time. Late or missing submissions will result in a 0 for professionalism.

A student teacher who is dismissed from a placement ends that placement immediately and will not be granted another placement that same semester. The student teacher may request a withdrawal per university policy; because Seminar assignments depend on the student teaching experience, a corresponding withdrawal from Seminar is generally advised.

A dismissed student teacher who believes they can later meet student teaching expectations may contact the Director of Student Teaching to reapply for a future semester, registering and paying for the Student Teaching Practicum and Seminar credits again. All student teachers remain subject to the University Catalog and Academic Integrity Policy.

Labor-Management Disputes

If a labor-management dispute (such as a strike, sit-in, demonstration, riot, or walkout) interrupts student teaching, notify the University Supervisor immediately so the School of Education can provide guidance.

Letters of Reference

Student teachers should request letters of reference from professional educators who can speak to their teaching skills — the Cooperating Teacher and University Supervisor are both appropriate references.

Pittsburgh Education Recruitment Consortium (PERC) Job Fair

PERC is held each spring in the Pittsburgh area. All School of Education graduates and student teachers are invited to attend; employers interview and hire education professionals across many disciplines, often on-site, making it a strong job opportunity for Point Park candidates and alumni.

Applying for the PA Level I Certificate

After completing student teaching, candidates may apply for the Level I Teaching Certificate through PDE's Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) once they have:

- Completed student teaching
- Earned at least a 1 in each of the four PDE 430 teaching domains
- Had their degree conferred by the Point Park Registrar's Office
- Passed all required certification exams
- Earned a minimum 3.0 GPA

Celebration of Student Teaching

The School of Education celebrates each cohort's completion of student teaching and graduation at the Celebration of Student Teaching, held the Friday evening before commencement. Student teachers, their Cooperating Teachers, and family members are all welcome; details are shared during the student teaching semester.

What Is Next

Apply for graduation through the Point Web Portal, where the Registrar's Office conducts final degree audits and processes regalia orders for commencement. Diplomas are mailed to the address provided in the graduation application once degrees are conferred.

Stay in touch with School of Education faculty and staff — we love hearing about your successes and sharing them with prospective students and alumni. After graduation, consider joining the Point Park University Alumni Association.

Once PDE issues the Level I certificate, candidates can add instructional areas through additional testing (for example, PreK–4 candidates may add grades 5 and 6), and can pursue Level II certification through Point Park's graduate programs.

Nondiscrimination

This policy affirms Point Park University's commitment to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and the pursuit of diversity. Point Park University does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion,

color, national origin, age (40 years and over), ancestry, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, height, weight, genetic information, marital status, caregiver status, or familial status, and such discrimination is prohibited in the administration of its educational programs and activities and with respect to employment or admission to the University's programs and activities.

This policy is in accord with local, state, and federal law, including Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Pittsburgh Human Relations Act. Inquiries regarding these policies, or complaints, may be directed to Point Park's Vice President of Human Resources (412-392-4727) and/or the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Inquiries about Title IX may be directed to Point Park's Title IX Coordinator, Stephanie Stark Poling (sstarkpoling@pointpark.edu, 412-392-3980, 201 Wood Street, Student Center, Room 104(A), Pittsburgh, PA 15222), and/or the Office for Civil Rights.

Point Park University's Title IX nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures are available at pointpark.edu/studentlife/titleix/index. Reports of policy violations, including conduct that may constitute sex discrimination under Title IX, can be filed through the Incident Reporting Form at pointpark.edu/incidentreport and will be processed by the University Office of Compliance and Integrity, or emailed to oci@pointpark.edu.