

Field Experience Guidelines: Stage 1 – Stage 4 All Certification Program Types

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Introduction

Field experiences serve as the cornerstone of professional preparation for future educators, education specialists, and school leaders, providing authentic contexts in which theory is translated into practice (Burns et al., 2025; Darling-Hammond, 2014; McIntyre et al., 1996). These structured, supervised learning opportunities enable candidates to observe and engage in the complex dynamics of teaching, support services, and leadership, deepening their understanding of how instructional, organizational, and cultural factors intersect to influence student learning and school improvement (Martin et al., 2022; Retallick & Miller, 2010). In addition to fostering professional growth, self-reflection, and the development of a professional identity (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Packard, 2003), high-quality field experiences strengthen partnerships between preparation programs and PK–12 schools, aligning professional training with the evolving demands of educational systems (Arman & Scherer, 2002; Petti, 2013).

General Design and Delivery

PDE expects that program providers will follow program guidelines to assure appropriate conditions for placement of candidates for field experiences in each program of study. As candidates progress from early field experiences through culminating clinical experiences the quality of placement sites is crucial. Candidates should have the opportunity to gain experiences that allow them to practice, develop and demonstrate competencies in their certification area. Program candidates should be provided with a broad set of meaningful interactions with PreK-12 students and professional staff, as well as willing and qualified site mentors. Candidates should be provided with frequent program provider supervision, and collaborative partnerships between the program provider and the local education agency. Within all certification program types, the Education Preparation Program (EPP) provider must ensure the candidates are meeting the competencies of the field experience requirements and track hours spent in the field by candidates. Candidates enrolled in preparation programs will complete up to four stages of field experiences. These stages are as follows:

- Stage 1 – Observation
- Stage 2 – Exploration
- Stage 3 – Pre-Internship/Pre-Practicum/Pre-Student Teaching
- Stage 4 – Internship/Practicum/Student Teaching

The table below outlines stage requirements for each type of certificate program.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Instructional 1 Undergraduate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Instructional 1 Post-Baccalaureate	Optional	Optional	Yes	Yes
Educational Specialist 1	Optional	Optional	Yes	Yes
Supervisory and Administrative	No	No	Yes	Yes
Program Specialist (ESL)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Program Endorsements	Embedded into the program through course content.	Embedded into the program through course content.	Embedded into the program through course content.	Embedded into the program through course content.

Project-Based Field Experience (PBF) may also be utilized in Stage 3 for both undergraduates and post-baccalaureate candidates for Instructional I/Educational Specialists I, but requirements need to be met as per the PBF guidelines (See Appendix A). Field experience for Supervisory and Administrative certificates includes portfolio work, as well as meeting years of experience needed in education on an Instructional I certificate.

Recognizing the central role of these experiences, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has developed a comprehensive set of field experience competencies to guide educator preparation across all Instructional I, Educational Specialist, Program Specialist, Supervisory, Administrative, and Program Endorsement certification programs. Through this framework, PDE ensures that all candidates engage in rigorous, high-quality, outcomes-focused field experiences that prepare them to meet the complex and evolving challenges of today's educational environments.

This document does not replace each specific program framework guidelines; it provides details for field experience requirements and the candidate competencies by certification type. Furthermore, the document outlines the descriptions and guidelines of the four stages of field experiences for each certification program type.

Instructional I Certification Programs

High-quality field experiences are essential for all Instructional I candidates at all grade levels because they provide the structured, classroom-based practice necessary for developing effective teaching skills. Research consistently links robust clinical experiences to increased teacher efficacy, stronger retention, and improved instructional performance (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ronfeldt, 2015; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Vagi et al., 2019). Effective fieldwork is characterized by alignment between coursework and practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006a), integration of child and adolescent development with pedagogy, supervision by trained and

experienced cooperating teachers (Lafferty, 2018), opportunities to implement evidence-based practices (Kim et al., 2024), and the use of performance-based assessments that reflect real classroom demands (Darling-Hammond, 2006a). Meaningful feedback throughout these experiences further supports candidates' growth (Jacobs et al., 2010). Appropriate placements, matched to candidates' developmental preparation stage and inclusive of content-specific mentorship at the secondary level, ensure that candidates gain the practical, research-aligned preparation needed to meet diverse learners' needs.

The following section provides an overview of four stages of field experiences delivered in Instructional Level I preparation programs.

Stages 1 & 2 Overview – Instructional Programs

Within a Stage 1 Field Experience (Observation), candidates are observers in a variety of education and education-related settings (e.g., community organizations, tutoring programs). Stage 1 field experiences allow candidates, before formal admission to the educator preparation program, to gain valuable experience through observation. Apart from community and after-school programs, there must also be a range of school and classroom experiences (e.g., urban, suburban, rural, high- and low-performing schools) so that candidates have a broad experience and learn as much as possible about K-12 learners and K-12 education philosophy. During the Stage 2 Field Experience (Exploration), the candidate works under a certified teacher's direction with a small group of students. Activities could include tutoring, helping with assignments, and so forth.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 are completed by undergraduates and should ideally occur before formal admission into an instructional preparation program. Stages 1 and 2 are optional for post-baccalaureate candidates.

Experience hours required for Stage 1 and Stage 2 total 40 hours.

Stage 3 Overview – Instructional Programs

During Stage 3 field experiences, PK–12 candidates have typically¹ been formally admitted to the education program. Candidates work with small groups of students in school or after-school settings under the supervision of a certified teacher and do not assume full responsibility for a class. Project-Based Field Experience (PBFE) may also be utilized in Stage 3 for both undergraduates and post-baccalaureate candidates for Instructional I/Educational Specialists I, but requirements need to be met as per the PBFE guidelines (See Appendix A). In Stage 3, the EPP provider may provide supervision; however, formal supervision is not required. If supervision occurs, these supervision hours are not the hours utilized to complete the PDE 430.

Experience hours required for Stage 3 are a minimum total of 150 hours.

¹ Exception for Approved Music Education Preparation Programs

Stage 4 Overview – Instructional Programs

Pennsylvania requires a minimum of 12 weeks of full-time Stage 4 Field Experience, supervised by qualified faculty and a cooperating teacher who holds the appropriate professional educator certification, has at least three years of satisfactory certified teaching experience, one year of certified experience in the specific placement, and has been trained by preparation program faculty (22 Pa. Code §354.25(f)). Candidates must be placed in developmentally appropriate courses with students whose cognitive, social, and emotional needs align with their preparation stage rather than in highly specialized or advanced settings such as Advanced Placement courses.

In Stage 4, the EPP provider must observe and supervise the candidate and complete the PDE 430, the formal evaluation of performance. Student teachers should be observed by an EPP evaluator or EPP approved alternative in the field at least four times, and must receive, at minimum, two formal PDE 430 evaluations of their performance – once at the mid-semester (or mid-point of the experience) and again at the end of the experience (a minimum of 12 weeks). This second PDE 430 is the formal evaluation upon which recommendation for certification is made. To further clarify, supervision of student teachers (which can occur in Stage 3 but must occur in Stage 4) is face-to-face observation working directly with students on-site and/or supervision of student teachers in virtual synchronous observations working directly with students in an approved virtual cyber or in an approved cyber charter placement (only 50% of the student teaching experience may be completed in this approved virtual environment – see Appendix B). Therefore, there is no online supervision for student teachers placed in a brick-and-mortar school.

If a candidate is completing 50% of their placement out-of-state or country, a [50% Out-of-State/Out-of-County Placement Notification Form](#) needs to be submitted. If a candidate is completing 100% of their placement out-of-state or country, a [100% Out-of-State/Out-of-Country Waiver for Student Teaching](#) must be applied for by the Field Placement Director of the EPP and approved before the start of the candidate's student teaching placement. Supervision of student teachers who complete 50% or less of their placement out-of-state or country and supervision of student teachers who have received a waiver for 100% student teaching out-of-state or country, must still occur. An EPP evaluator or EPP approved alternative must evaluate the student teacher at least four times and must complete two formal PDE 430 evaluations.

The following guidelines are to ensure that the Stage 4 experience meets statutory requirements while also providing flexibility for the field:

- Substitute teaching or experiential credit/learning **does not** replace the minimum 12-week supervised student teaching experience (either as an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate student) as required under 22 Pa. Code §354.25(f).
- Post-Baccalaureate students who are working on an experience-based certificate or as a type 01 long-term substitute in the subject area of their certificate may have the supervised student teaching experience incorporated into the internship or long-term substitute service as long as the student teaching experience satisfies the criteria

established in Chapter 354. Post-Baccalaureate students who are working on an experience-based certificate and are employed by a PA-approved cyber or cyber-charter school, may request their student teaching experience be completed 100% on-line but that request must be made by the EPP to the Division of Professional Education and Teacher Quality.

- The student teacher may not be the teacher of record unless they are a post-baccalaureate candidate serving in a Type 01 long-term substitute capacity or on an experience-based certificate as identified above.
- Per 24 P.S. § 12-1219 each teacher preparation program approved by the department shall have a policy regarding allowing an individual undertaking a student teacher program under 22 Pa. Code § 354.25(f) (relating to preparation program curriculum) and satisfying the requirements of section 1201.1(1) to teach as a substitute in exchange for financial compensation, if the individual has received at least one satisfactory observation related to the individual's student teacher program. A teacher preparation program policy may not prohibit substitute teaching by individuals who have received at least one satisfactory observation related to their student teacher program.
- Student teachers (students engaged in student teaching) per 22 Pa. Code §354.25(f) may not substitute for longer than 10 days in their assigned classroom or classrooms or for other teachers within the building or buildings where they have been placed as a student teacher and must possess at least one satisfactory observation related to their student teacher program [24 P.S. § 12-1201.1 & 12-1219]. The LEA (cooperating) teacher and IHE (supervisor) should work together to maintain the integrity of the student teaching experience.
- Student teachers operating in accordance with the policy required under section 1219 may be compensated as determined by the LEA where they are working.

Experience hours required for Stage 4 are a minimum total of 12 weeks (420 hours).

Candidate Competencies – Instructional Programs

Each stage of field experience will provide an opportunity for candidates to develop competency in six domains: 1) Planning and Preparation, 2) Classroom Environment, 3) Instructional Delivery, 4) Professional Conduct, 5) Assessment and 6) Knowledge of Diverse Learners.

Stages 1 & 2 Candidate Competencies – Instructional Programs

1. Planning and Preparation

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reflects on elements of planning and preparation from observations in educational settings.
- b) Applies knowledge of PA PreK-12 Academic Standards to classroom observations.
- c) Identifies ways in which the age and/or related characteristics of students observed in various learning environments were reflected in instructional planning.

- d) Identifies how learning goals were developed to address individual student needs.
- e) Identifies how various resources, materials, technology and activities engage students in meaningful learning based on instructional goals.

2. Classroom Environment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Describes elements of effective classroom management observed in various educational settings.
- b) Observes teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions and reflects on those observations.
- c) Observes how classroom resources are used to make adaptations and accommodations required to differentiate instruction for all learners.

3. Instructional Delivery

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Observes and reflects on effective verbal and non-verbal communication techniques.
- b) Observes and reflects on effective questioning and discussion techniques.
- c) Identifies ways in which technology is used as a teaching and learning tool.
- d) Reflects on the level of active student engagement during instructional delivery.
- e) Observes methods of communication of instructional goals, procedures, and content.

4. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Represents integrity, ethical behavior, and professional conduct as stated in the "PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators," as well as local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- b) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, and punctuality.

5. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Identifies and reports on various kinds of assessments used in instruction.
- b) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

6. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in the classroom.
- b) Reports on effective practices and opportunities designed to communicate with and engage families, caregivers, and the broader community.

Stage 3 Candidate Competencies – Instructional Programs

1. Planning and Preparation

Requirement is met when the candidate demonstrates:

- a) Adequate knowledge of content and related research-based pedagogy, based on sound educational psychology principles.
- b) Adequate knowledge of PA PreK-12 Academic Standards and the ability to use them to guide instructional planning.
- c) Adequate knowledge of the age and/or related characteristics of their students and the ability to use this knowledge to plan instruction.
- d) The ability to use formative and summative assessments to adapt learning goals that match individual student needs.
- e) The ability to plan instruction using appropriate resources, materials, and technology, and activities to engage students in meaningful learning based on their instructional goals.

2. Classroom Environment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Maintains a culture which values the development of meaningful, caring, and respectful relationships between teacher and students, and among students.
- b) Recognizes and supports the role of the prepared classroom environment as a necessary element to support optimal learning opportunities.
- c) Uses classroom resources to support equity and maximize learning opportunities, which are age-, gender- individually-, culturally- and ability-appropriate.
- d) Assesses classroom resources to make adaptations and accommodations required to differentiate instruction for all learners.
- e) Identifies opportunities for productive family and community contact.
- f) Demonstrates knowledge of and acts to support systems for student transitions, as well as procedures and routines for instructional and non-instructional responsibilities.

3. Instructional Delivery

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Uses effective verbal and non-verbal techniques.
- b) Uses effective questioning and discussion techniques.
- c) Uses a variety of age-, gender-, individually-, culturally-, ability-, and skill-appropriate instructional strategies, which reflect evidence of student engagement, new learning and assessment.
- d) Uses technology as an effective teaching and learning tool.
- e) Provides appropriate progress feedback to students in a timely manner.
- f) Uses active student engagement during instructional delivery.
- g) Uses formal and/or informal assessment to measure student responsiveness to instruction.

- h) Constructs thoughtful and accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which learning goals were achieved and can offer alternative actions if necessary.
- i) Clearly communicates instructional goals, procedures, and content.

4. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Initiates communication with the cooperating teacher regarding instructional and non-instructional record keeping, procedures and routines, and timelines; including, but not limited to, grading, attendance, lesson plans, parent communication, and inter-school needs.
- b) Demonstrates knowledge of and participates in district, college, regional, state, and/or national professional development growth and development opportunities.
- c) Exhibits integrity, ethical behavior and professional conduct as stated in the "PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators," as well as local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- d) Applies safety precautions and procedures.
- e) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, punctuality, and the use of technology.
- f) Develops and maintains professional relationships with school colleagues.

5. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Identifies and reports on various kinds of assessments used in instruction including formative, summative, benchmark, behavioral, diagnostic, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.
- b) Makes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations of assessment results.
- c) Applies interpretations to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- d) Applies interpretations of status (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment or PSSA) and growth (Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System or PVAAS) assessment models to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- e) Constructs assessments to match cognitive, affective, behavioral, and/or psychomotor curricular goals.
- f) Constructs assessments to match curricular goals along a continuum of complexity (e.g. Bloom's taxonomy).
- g) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

6. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in the classroom.
- b) Recognizes and supports elements of a positive learning environment that values and models respect for all students.
- c) Differentiates instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners that promotes successful educational performance.
- d) Recognizes policies and procedures designed to ensure that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, are valued in the school.
- e) Reports on effective practices and opportunities designed to communicate with and engage families, caregivers, and the broader community.

Stage 4 Candidate Competencies – Instructional Programs

1. Planning and Preparation

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Links content to related research-based pedagogy based on sound educational psychology principles in short and long-term instructional plans.
- b) Constructs all instructional plans to align with PA PreK-12 Academic Standards.
- c) Plans instruction that is responsive to the age and/or related characteristics of their students.
- d) Uses multiple forms of formative and summative assessments to adapt learning goals that match individual student needs.
- e) Plans short and long-range instruction using appropriate resources, materials, technology, and activities to engage students in meaningful learning based on their instructional goals.
- f) Assesses existing resources and creates and/or accesses additional instructional resources appropriate for learners under their responsibility.

2. Classroom Environment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Maintains and promotes a culture which values the development of meaningful, caring, and respectful relationships between teacher and students, and among students.
- b) Creates and maintains a prepared classroom environment as a necessary element to support optimal learning opportunities.
- c) Uses classroom resources to support equity and maximize learning opportunities, which are age-, gender-, individually-, culturally-, and ability-appropriate.
- d) Assesses classroom resources to make adaptations and accommodations required to differentiate instruction for all learners.
- e) Engages in proactive communication with families and community contacts.

- f) Develops and/or supports systems for student transitions, as well as procedures and routines for instructional and non-instructional responsibilities.

3. Instructional Delivery

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Uses effective verbal and non-verbal communication techniques.
- b) Uses effective questioning and discussion techniques.
- c) Uses a variety of age-, gender-, individually-, culturally-, ability- and skill-appropriate instructional strategies which reflect evidence of student engagement, new learning and assessment.
- d) Uses instructional technology and assesses its impact on student learning.
- e) Provides appropriate progress feedback to students in a timely manner.
- f) Uses active student engagement during instructional delivery.
- g) Uses a variety of formal and informal assessments to measure student responsiveness to instruction.
- h) Constructs a thoughtful and accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which learning goals were achieved and can offer alternative actions if necessary.
- i) Actively seeks, and is responsive to, constructive feedback offered by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor.
- j) Clearly communicates instructional goals, procedures, and content.
- k) Accesses communication technologies to communicate with families regarding student progress.

4. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Communicates with the cooperating teacher regarding instructional and non-instructional record keeping, procedures and routines, and timelines; including, but not limited to, grading, attendance, lesson plans, parent communication, and inter-school needs and assumes these responsibilities as permitted.
- b) Participates in district, college, regional, state, and/or national professional development growth and development opportunities.
- c) Exhibits integrity, ethical behavior, and professional conduct as stated in the "PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators," as well as local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- d) Avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with students.
- e) Applies safety precautions and procedures.
- f) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, punctuality, and the use of technology.
- g) Cultivates professional relationships with school colleagues, families and the broader community; and avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with colleagues, families, and the broader community.

5. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Uses various kinds of assessments in instruction, including formative, summative, benchmark, behavioral, diagnostic, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.
- b) Makes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations of assessment results.
- c) Applies interpretations to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- d) Applies interpretations of status (PSSA) and growth (PVAAS) assessment models to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- e) Constructs assessments to match cognitive, affective, behavioral, and/or psychomotor curricular goals.
- f) Constructs assessments to match curricular goals along a continuum of complexity (e.g. Bloom's taxonomy).
- g) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

6. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Appropriately responds to the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in the classroom.
- b) Promotes a positive learning environment that values and fosters respect for all students.
- c) Differentiates instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners that promotes successful educational performance.
- d) Supports the growth and development of all students, particularly those traditionally underserved.
- e) Communicates with and engages families, caregivers, and the broader community.

Additional Guidance for Instructional I Certification Programs

This section offers additional guidance on field experiences for Career and Technical Education Programs, Add-on and Dual Programs, Reading Specialist Programs, and the Experienced-Based Certificate Programs.

Career and Technical Education Programs

EPP providers that deliver the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program will provide candidates with the same preparation as candidates pursuing non-CTE instructional certifications. Meaning, candidates will complete the required hours of field experiences in the four Stages across their 18 credits of Level I coursework.

Add-on and Dual Programs

Candidates who already hold an Instructional I certificate and wish to add an Instructional I certificate in an area that cannot be added through testing do not complete a Stage 3 experience and may complete their second Stage 4 experience through a focused 6-week placement (210 hours) in the new certification area.

Program areas eligible to be added on through a 6-week placement include:

- American Sign Language PK-12 (Hearing Impaired PK-12 [9205] instructional certificate holders who pass the ASL content test may add the subject area to their certificate through testing only)
- Cooperative Education 7-12
- Health and Physical Education PK-12
- Reading Specialist PK-12
- All Special Education PK-12 (Educators holding PA Special Education PK-8 or 7-12 who want to add the opposite special education grade scope must take the opposite grade scope special education test.)

Reading Specialist Programs

Candidates who currently hold an Instructional I or Program Specialist certificate in areas that include required literacy competencies may not complete a Stage 3 experience and may complete their second Stage 4 experience for the Reading Specialist (PK–12) certificate through a 3-week placement (105 hours), as their prior preparation satisfies foundational literacy requirements.

Program areas eligible include:

- English 7-12
- ESL PK-12
- Foreign Language PK-12 (all languages)
- Grades 4-8
- PK-4
- Special Education PK-12

In all cases, candidates must still complete an approved preparation program in the new certification area, as required by regulation. One PDE 430 must also be completed during the Stage 4 experience to recommend certification.

Experience-Based Certificate (EBC) Program

Candidates within an EBC program will complete Stage 3 and Stage 4 Field experiences. At the conclusion of these field experiences, candidates are prepared to enter the profession as competent, reflective educators capable of designing and delivering instruction that meets the diverse cognitive, social, and emotional needs of students. EPP providers should structure the

field experiences to align with coursework and program exit competencies, ensuring candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors required to foster student learning effectively.

Within the first year of being on an EBC, candidates must receive regular observations and feedback once per month. At the time in which the candidate enrolls in the course that requires the Stage 4 Field Experience (12-week minimum), the EPP provider must provide four observations and supervision which includes completing two PDE 430 formal evaluations. The PDE 430 is completed at the midpoint of the course and at the final evaluation to support a recommendation for an Instructional I certificate in the candidate's chosen instructional area. If the candidate is not able to acquire employment during the Stage 4 Field Experience on an EBC, then the program provider must transfer the candidate into a traditional post-baccalaureate program and secure a 12-week student teaching placement as required by Chapter 354 (22. Pa Code §354.25(d) & (f))

Educational Specialist Certification Programs

Field experiences are essential for Educational Specialist candidates, providing the applied context needed to develop the skills required to support diverse student needs. Research consistently shows that comprehensive, data-driven support services contribute to improved student attendance, connectedness, and academic and behavioral outcomes (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012). These gains emerge when specialists engage directly with students, educators, and school systems to design and implement evidence-based practices (Pas et al., 2019; Piccolo et al., 2019). Effective fieldwork also strengthens core professional competencies, including assessment, intervention, collaboration, and data-informed decision-making, which are vital for delivering high-quality services across school settings (ASCA, 2025; ASHA, 2025; NASP, 2020).

As with Instructional Level I Post-Baccalaureate Certification Programs, Educational Specialist Certification Programs include Stages 3 and 4 Field Experiences. If an EPP has an approved undergraduate Educational Specialist I program (this may occur with Instructional Technology Specialist and School Nurse), these programs require Stages 1-4. Post-Baccalaureate programs may include Stages 1 and 2, but these are not required. The next section offers details on the components of each stage.

Stages 1 & 2 Overview – Educational Specialist Programs

The first stage of field experience introduces Education Specialist candidates to educational environments through structured observation and guided participation. Candidates engage in a range of formal, required school and community activities under the mentorship of a qualified site supervisor or professional practitioner. The purpose of this stage is to build awareness of the roles and responsibilities of Education Specialists, the organization of school systems, and the needs of diverse student populations. Faculty and mentors support candidates in observing professional practices, understanding ethical standards, and reflecting on their developing

professional identities. This stage establishes a foundation for more active engagement in subsequent experiences.

In Stage 2, candidates move beyond observation to more active involvement within the school setting. Under continued supervision, they begin applying foundational skills, such as collecting and analyzing data, supporting student interventions, and assisting with case-related activities, appropriate to their specific specialization area (e.g., counseling, psychology, speech-language services). These experiences are purposefully integrated with academic coursework to promote the connection between theory and practice. Institutions design this stage to provide structured, progressive opportunities for candidates to gain confidence and competence while being closely monitored and evaluated. By the conclusion of this stage, candidates should demonstrate readiness to participate in more direct and sustained professional practice.

Experience hours required for undergraduate Stage 1 and Stage 2 total 40 hours. For post-baccalaureate programs, Stages 1 and 2 are optional.

Stage 3 Overview – Educational Specialist Programs

Throughout this stage, there should be an emphasis placed on hands-on practice where candidates apply theoretical knowledge and refine core professional skills in authentic educational settings. Candidates engage in direct service activities appropriate to their specialization, such as counseling sessions, assessments, therapy interventions, or consultation with school staff and families. Stage 3 Field Experiences for Education Specialists must include regular individual or group supervision by a mentor/preceptor and discussion of ongoing progress with faculty supervisors. These experiences help candidates demonstrate professional competence, ethical practice, and the ability to serve diverse PreK–12 student populations. This stage serves as the bridge between initial training and full professional immersion. In Stage 3, the EPP provider may provide supervision; however, formal supervision is not required. If supervision occurs, these supervision hours are not the hours utilized to complete the PDE 430.

Experience hours required for Stage 3 are a minimum total of 150 hours.

Stage 4 Overview – Educational Specialist Programs

This final phase for Educational Specialist is a culminating field experience with consistent supervision. Candidates complete an extensive, supervised field experience that reflects the full range of responsibilities within their specialization. Over a sustained period, they provide direct and indirect services to students, families, and school personnel through assessment, intervention, consultation, program development, and systems-level collaboration. They participate in ongoing individual and group supervision and receive at least two formal performance evaluations (PDE 430). For each of the educational specialist programs, Stage 4 varies:

- Home and School Visitor candidates complete a minimum 12-week field experience (420 hours).

- Instructional Technology Specialist candidates complete a minimum 12-week field experience (420 hours).
- School Nurse candidates complete a minimum 12-week field experience (420 hours).
- School Psychologist candidates complete a 1,000-hour Stage 4 Field Experience (NASP).²
- School Social Worker candidates complete 900 hours of field experience (CSWE).³
- School Speech-Language Pathologist candidates complete a minimum 12-week field experience.
- Elementary and Secondary School Counselor candidates complete a minimum 12-week field experience (420 hours).

The PDE 430 is completed at the midpoint of the field experience and at the final evaluation to support a recommendation for Education Specialist.

Candidate Competencies – Educational Specialist Programs

Field Experiences for Educational Specialist Programs must provide opportunities for candidates to meet competencies in their subject-specific area and provide documentation of the competencies being met.

Stages 1 & 2 Candidate Competencies – Educational Specialist

1. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Represents integrity, ethical behavior, and professional conduct as stated in the “PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators,” as well as local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- b) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, and punctuality.

2. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Identifies and reports on various kinds of assessments used in instruction or practice
- b) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

3. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture, or ability) in the classroom.

² National Association of School Psychologists

³ Council on Social Work Education

- b) Reports on effective practices and opportunities designed to communicate with and engage families, caregivers, and the broader community.

Stage 3 Candidate Competencies – Educational Specialist

1. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Initiates communication with the mentor/preceptor regarding instructional and non-instructional record keeping, procedures and routines, and timelines; including, but not limited to, grading, attendance, lesson plans, parent communication, and inter-school needs.
- b) Demonstrates knowledge of and participates in district, college, regional, state, and/or national professional development growth and development opportunities.
- c) Exhibits integrity, ethical behavior, and professional conduct as stated in the “PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators,” as well as local, state, and federal laws and regulations, including ethical codes of their national organizations.
- d) Applies safety precautions and procedures.
- e) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, punctuality, and the use of technology.
- f) Develops and maintains professional relationships with school colleagues.

2. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Identifies, conducts, and reports on a range of multi-domain assessments used in instruction or practice including diagnostic, baseline, formative/ongoing monitoring, summative evaluations, behavioral observations, cognitive and affective functioning, and psychomotor skills to inform interventions, guide individualized support plans, and optimize student outcomes.
- b) Makes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations of assessment results.
- c) Applies interpretations to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- d) Applies interpretations of status (PSSA) and growth (PVASS) assessment models to inform multi-disciplinary planning, targeted interventions, and specialized support for groups and individual students.
- e) Constructs assessments to match cognitive, affective, behavioral, and/or psychomotor curricular goals.
- f) Constructs assessments to match individual or instructional goals along a continuum of complexity.
- g) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

3. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in instruction or practice.
- b) Recognizes and supports elements of a positive learning environment that values and models respect for all students.
- c) Differentiates instruction or practice to accommodate diverse learner needs, promoting equitable access and successful educational performance.
- d) Recognizes policies and procedures designed to ensure that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, are valued in the school.
- e) Reports on effective practices and opportunities designed to communicate with and engage families, caregivers, and the broader community.

4. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on examples of field-based federal, state and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures that impact school district operations at macro and micro levels.
- b) Determines specific roles and responsibilities for adherence/compliance with federal, state and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures.
- c) Assists with the completion of all compliance documentation.
- d) Reports on how the school district disseminates information on regulatory changes to appropriate stakeholders.
- e) Identifies example(s) of compliance problems and assists with alternative actions to resolve targeted compliance issues.

5. Organizational Leadership

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Describes the working relationships within the school district's organizational chart including external partnerships.
- b) Demonstrates an understanding of organizational structures and administrative hierarchies to effectively navigate systemic workflows, access district resources, and collaborate across departments to support student success.
- c) Identifies and articulates the role, responsibilities, and scope of practice of their specialized discipline within the educational organization, including administrative relationships, professional constraints, collaborative opportunities, and available resources.
- d) Identifies challenges within their professional scope of practice and develops a strategic, organizationally aligned action plan that addresses the change process through conflict resolution, clear communication, interprofessional collaboration, needs assessment, and student advocacy.

Stage 4 Candidate Competencies – Educational Specialist

1. Professional Conduct

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Communicates with the mentor/preceptor regarding instructional and non-instructional record keeping, procedures and routines, and timelines; including, but not limited to, grading, attendance, lesson plans, parent communication, and inter-school needs and assumes these responsibilities as permitted.
- b) Participates in district, college, regional, state, and/or national professional development growth and development opportunities.
- c) Exhibits integrity, ethical behavior, and professional conduct as stated in the “PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators,” as well as local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- d) Avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with students.
- e) Applies safety precautions and procedures.
- f) Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, punctuality, and the use of technology.
- g) Cultivates professional relationships with school colleagues, families, and the broader community; and avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with colleagues, families, and the broader community.

2. Assessment

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Uses various kinds of assessments in instruction or practice, including formative, summative, benchmark, behavioral, diagnostic, cognitive, affective and psychomotor.
- b) Makes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations of assessment results.
- c) Applies interpretations to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- d) Applies interpretations of status (PSSA) and growth (PVAAS) assessment models to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- e) Constructs assessments to match cognitive, affective, behavioral and/or psychomotor curricular goals.
- f) Constructs assessments to match curricular or individual goals along a continuum of complexity.
- g) Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

3. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Appropriately responds to the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in instruction or practice.

- b) Promotes a positive learning environment that values and fosters respect for all students.
- c) Differentiates instruction and strategies/interventions to meet the needs of diverse learners that promotes successful educational performance.
- d) Supports the growth and development of all students, particularly those traditionally underserved.
- e) Communicates with and engages families, caregivers, and the broader community.

4. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Participates in site-based federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures that impact school district operations at macro and micro levels.
- b) Performs in the specific roles and responsibilities for adherence/compliance with federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies and procedures.
- c) Assists with the completion of all compliance documentation.
- d) Participates in the school district dissemination of information on regulatory changes to appropriate stakeholders.
- e) Identifies example(s) of compliance problems and designs alternative actions to resolve targeted compliance issues.
- f) Develops and presents plans on the allocation of resources needed to maintain and/or improve compliance.

5. Organizational Leadership

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of organizational hierarchy, reporting lines, and interdepartmental relationships to effectively align specialized practices with broader systemic functions and district operations.
- b) Participates within the defined role of their certification area within the organization to include responsibilities, relationships, constraints, opportunities, and resources.
- c) Identifies a problem within the scope of their certification area and creates and presents a visionary action plan, consistent with the organization and to promote a culture of change; including resolution of conflicts, communication, collaboration, needs assessment, and advocacy.

Supervisory and Administrative Certification Programs

The next section of this document provides the framework for Supervisory and Administrative Certification Programs. Since these two certification program types are only delivered at the post-baccalaureate level, there are only two field experience stages that are required within these preparation programs: Stages 3 and 4. For each certification type, the next section will

provide an overview of Stages 3 and 4. At the end of the section, the EPP provider will find the candidate competencies for both of these programs.

Supervisory Certification Programs

Field-based training plays a critical role in preparing effective supervisors. Strong supervisory leadership has been shown to shape school and district performance in meaningful ways, influencing organizational conditions, as well as teacher and student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008; Tan et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024). For this reason, developing robust field experiences for aspiring supervisors is essential. Field experiences work best when they are intentionally linked to coursework (Perez et al., 2011), grounded in real supervisory responsibilities (Clayton & Thessin, 2017), enriched by exposure to varied school environments (Reyes-Guerra & Barnett, 2016), and supported through guidance from seasoned mentors (Clayton & Myran, 2013). When candidates engage in fieldwork that spans the entire 12-month school cycle, they gain insight into the full rhythm of school operations, including the planning, implementation, and reflection processes central to effective leadership. Additionally, field experiences offer valuable opportunities to build key competencies such as collaboration, instructional supervision, and data-driven decision-making (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

Stage 3 Overview - Supervisory Programs

Supervisory experiences include activities such as instructional supervision, teacher evaluation, curriculum review, data analysis, staff development, and school improvement tasks. Candidates work under the guidance of an approved site-based supervisor and program faculty across varied school environments and grade levels. Candidates model ethical conduct, maintain awareness of relevant policies, and pursue ongoing professional learning. They gain experience with statutory and regulatory compliance, assist with required documentation, and help address compliance challenges. Candidates also examine organizational structures, clarify the role of their certification area, and develop an action plan that addresses a school or district need. Additionally, they strengthen their capacity to support diverse learners by reviewing policies and practices, identifying effective strategies for varied student needs, fostering communication with families, and demonstrating culturally responsive interactions with stakeholders.

Stage 4 Overview – Supervisory Programs

Candidates assume broader supervisory responsibilities under the joint mentorship of a site-based supervisor and program faculty. During this phase, candidates lead initiatives in instructional supervision, curriculum management, professional development, student support services, compliance activities, and systems-level planning. The Stage 4 Field Experience for Supervisory Certificates allows candidates to apply supervisory competencies in authentic school settings while demonstrating readiness for professional supervisory roles. The field experience duration follows certification-area expectations:

- Vocational Supervisor candidates complete a 360-hour experience
- Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, and Supervisor Single Area, complete a minimum 12-week experience (420 hours).

- Supervisor of Special Education candidates complete field experiences of unspecified length in addition to a 300-hour practicum.

Field experience for Supervisory certificates includes portfolio work, as well as at least five years of experience in education on an Instructional I certificate.

Administrative Certification Programs (Directors, Principals, and Superintendents)

Field-based training is a foundational element in the preparation of directors, principals, and superintendents. Research has demonstrated that strong school leadership significantly influences schools and school districts, with particularly notable effects on organizational, teacher, and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2022). Thus, the cultivation of high-quality field experiences for aspiring school leaders is essential. These experiences are most effective when integrated with coursework (Barakat et al., 2019), grounded in authentic leadership responsibilities (Clayton & Thessin, 2017; Drake, 2022), include exposure to diverse school settings (Reyes-Guerra & Barnett, 2016), and are supported by experienced mentors (Clayton et al., 2013). Engaging in fieldwork that spans the full 12-month school cycle further allows aspiring administrators to observe the complete rhythm of school operations, including planning, implementation, and reflection phases critical to effective leadership. Moreover, field experiences are rich sites for developing essential skills in collaboration, instructional supervision, and data-informed decision-making (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

Stage 3 Overview – Administrative Programs

Candidates participate in school and district leadership activities, including administrative meetings, data analysis, curriculum planning, policy review, school culture work, and stakeholder communication. With support from a principal mentor and supervision from program faculty, candidates apply program competencies in real school contexts across varied environments. This phase includes application of skills in scenarios involving students with special needs and English Learners (ELLs), with a focus on decision-making, collaboration, ethical practice, and professional communication.

Stage 4 Overview – Administrative Programs

Candidates assume full administrative responsibilities under the supervision of certified and experienced school leaders, with additional supervision by program faculty and guidance from a principal mentor. During the Stage 4 Field Experience, candidates design and implement action plans, oversee compliance and operational initiatives, and lead communication with staff, families, and community partners. This phase requires candidates to demonstrate competence, sound judgment, and readiness for independent administrative practice. Director, Principal PK–12, and Superintendent candidates complete a full-year (12-month) field experience consisting of a minimum of 360 hours in a brick-and-mortar school in the state of Pennsylvania. Field experience for the Administrative certificate includes portfolio work, as well as at least three years of experience in education. As an exception, 180 hours of Stage 4 can be completed in a PA Cyber or Cyber Charter School for those that are currently teachers in that school setting

only. The remaining 180 hours for those candidates would need to be completed in a brick-and-mortar school, and those remaining hours could be completed during the summer months when school is not in session.

Candidate Competencies for Supervisory and Administrative Programs

Stages 3 and 4 of field experience will provide an opportunity for Supervisory and Administrative candidates to develop competency in six domains: 1) Assessment and Evaluation, 2) Curriculum and Instruction, 3) Professionalism, 4) Statutory and Regulatory Compliance, 5) Organizational Leadership and 6) Diverse Learners.

Stage 3 Candidate Competencies for Supervisory and Administrative candidates

1. Assessment and Evaluation

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Demonstrates the appropriate use of data in forming decisions, utilizing resources, setting targets, and interpreting results aimed at continuous improvement in curriculum, personnel, and/or programs.
- b) Accesses and interprets data from available technologies and resources to address long-term and strategic planning needs of the school in areas of personnel, fiscal operations, facilities, technology, and/or other school district initiatives.
- c) Examines data from local, state, and national sources to monitor and enhance student achievement.
- d) Determines the type of data that is communicated to each group of stakeholders, how data is presented, and the implications of information dissemination.

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Demonstrates clear connections between theory and practice in curricular and instructional leadership.
- b) Participates in the process of development, assessment, and/or refinement of standards-based curriculum.
- c) Demonstrates knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to one's leadership responsibility to support curricular and instructional excellence.
- d) Articulates a vision for student success and a positive school climate that supports equal access to curricular and instructional excellence.

3. Professionalism

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Fosters relationships with stakeholders and acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner as stated in the “PA Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators.”
- b) Evaluates the effectiveness of his/her actions and interactions with all stakeholders via verbal and non-verbal communication.
- c) Actively seeks current information to support their on-going short and long-term professional development goals.
- d) Maintains a current level of knowledge of school district, state, and federal regulations, policies, and professional practices.

4. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on examples of field-based federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures that impact school district operations at macro and micro levels.
- b) Determines specific roles and responsibilities for adherence/compliance with federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures.
- c) Assists with the completion of all compliance documentation.
- d) Reports on how the school district disseminates information on regulatory changes to appropriate stakeholders.
- e) Identifies example(s) of compliance problems and assists with alternative actions to resolve targeted compliance issues.

5. Organizational Leadership

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Describes the working relationships within the school district’s organizational chart including external partnerships.
- b) Demonstrates knowledge of functional relationships in the organizational chart to systemic functions.
- c) Identifies the role of their certification area within the organization to include responsibilities, relationships, constraints, opportunities, and resources.
- d) Identifies a problem within the scope of their certification area and creates a visionary action plan, consistent with the organization and sensitive to the change process; including resolution of conflicts, communication, collaboration, needs assessment, and advocacy.

6. Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on current policies and practices designed to support children, caregivers, and families from diverse backgrounds.

- b) Analyzes current efforts to support diverse learners and how the broader community views learning differences.
- c) Fosters communication with families of English language learners (ELL) to ensure that learners and their families have access to communication in their native language.
- d) Identifies the use of strategies and resources for students with diverse needs including, but not limited to, gifted, ELL, and students with disabilities.
- e) Advises and supports educators in modifications to the learning environment that are evidence-based practices that do not compromise curricular intent and rigor.
- f) Demonstrates positive and appropriate interactions with all stakeholders in the school environment and community at large.
- g) Participates with educators and social agencies working with diverse learners to create learning opportunities.

Stage 4 Candidate Competencies for Supervisory and Administrative candidates

1. Assessment and Evaluation

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Uses data from multiple sources including PSSA and PVAAS in forming decisions, utilizing resources, setting targets, and interpreting results aimed at continuous improvement in student achievement, curriculum, personnel, and/or programs.
- b) Accesses and interprets data from available technologies and resources to address long-term and strategic planning needs of the school in areas of student achievement, personnel, fiscal operations, facilities, technology, and/or other school district initiatives.
- c) Compares data from local, state, and national sources to develop an action plan designed to enhance student success.
- d) Communicates an action plan to a select group of stakeholders that is responsive to how data is presented and the implications of information dissemination.

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Presents clear connections between theory and practice in curricular and instructional leadership.
- b) Participates in the development, assessment, and/or refinement of standards-based curriculum.
- c) Demonstrates knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to one's leadership responsibility to support curricular and instructional excellence.
- d) Creates a vision for student success and a positive school climate that supports equal access to curricular and instructional excellence.

3. Professionalism

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Fosters relationships with stakeholders and acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner as stated in the “PA Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators.”
- b) Evaluates the effects of his/her actions and interactions with all stakeholders via verbal and non-verbal communication.
- c) Engages in programs designed to support his/her on-going short and long-term professional development goals.
- d) Avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with students, colleagues, families, and the broader community.
- e) Demonstrates an understanding of current school district, state, and federal regulations, policies, and professional practices.

4. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Participates in site-based federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures that impact school district operations at macro and micro levels.
- b) Performs in the specific roles and responsibilities for adherence/compliance with federal, state, and local legislation, regulations, mandates, policies, and procedures.
- c) Assists with the completion of all compliance documentation.
- d) Participates in the school district dissemination of information on regulatory changes to appropriate stakeholders.
- e) Identifies example(s) of compliance problems and designs alternative actions to resolve targeted compliance issues.
- f) Develops and presents plans on the allocation of resources needed to maintain and/or improve compliance.

5. Organizational Leadership

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Demonstrates knowledge of all systemic relationships in the organizational chart and their corollary systemic functions.
- b) Participates within the defined role of their certification area within the organization to include responsibilities, relationships, constraints, opportunities, and resources.
- c) Identifies a problem within the scope of their certification area and creates and presents a visionary action plan, consistent with the organization and to promote a culture of change; including resolution of conflicts, communication, collaboration, needs assessment, and advocacy.

6. Diverse Learners

Requirement is met when the candidate:

- a) Reports on current policies and practices designed to support children, caregivers, and families from diverse backgrounds.
- b) Analyzes reports and presents on current efforts to support diverse learners and how the broader community views learning differences.
- c) Communicates with families of English language learners (ELL) and culturally diverse learners to ensure that learners and their families have access to communication in their native language.
- d) Advocates for the use of effective strategies and resources for students with diverse needs including, but not limited to, gifted, ELL, and students with disabilities.
- e) Advises and supports educators in modifications to the learning environment that are evidence-based practices that do not compromise curricular intent and rigor.
- f) Demonstrates positive and appropriate interactions with all stakeholders in the school environment and community at large.
- g) Collaborates with educators and social agencies working with diverse learners to create a coherent vision for learning opportunities.

Program Specialist Certification Programs (English as a Second Language - ESL)

Field experiences for program specialists provide candidates with structured, hands-on opportunities to apply specialized knowledge and skills in authentic educational settings (Reinhardt, et al., 2024; Schultz, 2020; Song, et al., 2020; Torres, et al., 2023). These experiences should be intentionally embedded across all stages of coursework so that each stage introduces, reinforces, or deepens practical competencies in a progressively more advanced manner. Throughout all field experiences, candidates are expected to understand and adhere to relevant Codes of Conduct, maintain appropriate student, family, and staff confidentiality, acquire and uphold all required clearances, and follow the policies and procedures of the host institution. Candidates should also demonstrate the ability to advocate for high-quality, child-centered instructional practices through appropriate supervisory channels, including fulfilling obligations related to mandated reporter requirements.

Effective field experiences provide candidates with increasing exposure to learning situations and school settings under the guidance of program faculty and trained mentors throughout the preparation program. ESL field experiences are embedded in the coursework of the ESL program. For these experiences, the EPP is advised of the following:

1. At least one experience must be in (or related to) a public-school setting.
2. The educator can complete the field experience of the ESL program within their classroom if the educator has ESL students within the classroom. If the educator does not have ESL students within their classroom, then the educator should observe an

appropriately trained and ESL certified colleague (to serve as mentor) who has ELs within their classroom.

3. If the educator candidate does not have a classroom placement, then the EPP can identify/approve other experiences in which the educator can observe the strategies and/or practice the strategies relevant to the ESL certification.
4. Because field experiences are embedded within the ESL program coursework, an EPP must have a mechanism for tracking the required number of hours of field experience for the ESL candidate. *The goal of field experience is observation/exploration. Therefore, ESL candidates are required to complete a total of 40 hours of field experience within the overall ESL preparation program.*
5. When incorporating field experiences within the coursework:
 - a) EPPs should consult the performance criteria of the [Educator Effectiveness Observation & Practice](#). EPPs shall focus on Domain 1 and Domain 3, because the ESL certificate is attained only after an educator has obtained an Instructional Level I or II certificate.
 - b) Some competencies can only be accomplished through field experiences. For example: DOMAIN 3: Instruction/COMPONENT 3E: *Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness* – “The student teacher demonstrates adaptability to adjust and differentiate instruction for all PK-12 students and promotes learning through extensive instructional strategies and flexibility for student interests and teachable moments.”
 - c) When designing an ESL preparation program, the EPP shall develop and incorporate assessments of ESL field experiences that include a comprehensive means to assess Domains 1 and 3 (i.e., reflective log and mentor feedback if the educator is using their own classroom).

Stages 1 & 2 Overview – Program Specialist Program

Within a Stage 1 Field Experience (Observation), candidates are observers in a variety of education and education-related settings (e.g., community organizations, tutoring programs). Programs are expected to design this phase so that candidates observe before formal admission to the preparation program. Apart from community and after-school programs, there must also be a range of school and classroom experiences (e.g., urban, suburban, rural, high- and low-performing schools) so that candidates have a broad experience and learn as much as possible about K-12 learners and K-12 education philosophy. During the Stage 2 Field Experience (Exploration), the candidate works under a certified teacher’s direction with a small group of students. Activities could include tutoring, helping with assignments, and so forth.

Candidate Competencies – Program Specialist (ESL Program)

Field experience will provide an opportunity for Program Specialist candidates to develop competency in Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the [Educator Effectiveness Observation & Practice](#) (as provided below).

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

The candidate:

A. Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

Demonstrates knowledge of content discipline, including dominant and relational structures, key components, and currency.

B. Demonstrating Knowledge of PK-12 Students

Actively seeks knowledge of PK-12 students' unique skills, knowledge, cultural background, and individual learning needs and the effect on student learning.

C. Setting Instructional Outcomes

Sets instructional outcomes that are rigorous and appropriately sequenced, addressing differentiation in learning and viable methods of assessment for all PK-12 students.

D. Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

Utilizes a variety of relevant research-based resources, experiences, and opportunities to enhance student learning and to further teacher content knowledge and pedagogy.

E. Designing Coherent Instruction

Designs instruction to include multiple deliveries, transitioning easily from one to another, as well as thoughtful planning to instructional groups and engaging activities for all learners.

F. Designing Student Assessment

Designs assessments to match clearly defined learning expectations for all PK-12 students as part of the instructional process to guide future planning.

Domain 3: Instruction

The candidate:

A. Communicating with Students

Sets clear expectations and utilizes a variety of instructional techniques and ongoing assessment to adapt to all PK-12 students' knowledge and needs.

B. Questioning and Discussion Techniques

Uses a variety of questioning techniques to ensure PK-12 students are actively engaged in learning with opportunities for all PK-12 students to share content through varied discussion formats.

C. Engaging Students in Learning Activities and Assignments

Engages all PK-12 students in varied instructional modalities, as well as encouraging independent and social-emotional learning using meaningful grouping methodologies.

D. Using Assessment in Instruction

Utilizes ongoing strategies to gauge student knowledge and understanding, empowering PK-12 students to self-assess, to monitor progress, and to establish high-standards for assessment.

E. Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Demonstrates adaptability to adjust and differentiate instruction for all PK-12 students and promotes learning through extensive instructional strategies and flexibility for student interests and teachable moments.

Program Endorsement Certification Programs

Field experiences for program endorsements provide certified educators with structured opportunities to apply course concepts in real educational settings (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Ronfeldt, 2015). These experiences should be intentionally integrated throughout the coursework so that each class introduces, reinforces, or extends practical skills in progressively complex ways (Darling-Hammond, 2006; McIntyre et al., 1996).

To ensure the consistency of field experiences with course content and the 12-credit requirement maximum of Program Endorsement preparation programs, field experiences will be integrated into course content. Fieldwork should culminate in a capstone project that synthesizes course learning and field-based observations, demonstrating the candidate's readiness in their endorsement area.

The program should include a capstone field experience that appropriately synthesizes and applies program instruction in a real-world context. EPP providers should provide candidates with an opportunity to work with program advisors to secure a PK-12 school partner for this experience. The experience can be tailored and differentiated to match the candidates' professional goals related to their desired role(s) within a PK-12 system. The field experience will contain adequate rigor that demonstrates practical application of coursework and provides new opportunities for professional growth.

Candidate Competencies – Program Endorsement

Field experience will provide an opportunity for Program Endorsement candidates to develop competency in areas of Domain 1 and Domain 4 of the [Educator Effectiveness Observation & Practice](#) (as provided below).

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

The candidate:

A. Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

Demonstrates knowledge of content discipline, including dominant and relational structures, key components, and currency.

B. Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

Utilizes a variety of relevant research-based resources, experiences, and opportunities to enhance student learning and to further teacher content knowledge and pedagogy.

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

The candidate:

A. Reflecting on Teaching

Utilizes self-reflection and input from the educational community to assess teaching effectiveness in order to inform future practice.

B. Participating in a Professional Community

Collaborates with colleagues, community stakeholders, district leadership, and professional learning communities to improve instructional skills and student success and to contribute to school and community initiatives.

C. Growing and Developing Professionally

Is engaged in professional development and action research to keep current in instructional trends utilizing collegial networks and professional organizations.

D. Showing Professionalism

Actions demonstrate integrity and ethical conduct while consistently advocating for all PK-12 students.

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Appendix A: Project-Based Field Experience

Introduction

Field experiences serve as the cornerstone of professional preparation for future educators, education specialists, and school leaders, providing authentic contexts in which theory is translated into practice (Burns et al., 2025; Darling-Hammond, 2014; McIntyre et al., 1996). These structured, supervised learning opportunities enable candidates to observe and engage in the complex dynamics of teaching, support services, and leadership, deepening their understanding of how instructional, organizational, and cultural factors intersect to influence student learning and school improvement (Martin et al., 2022; Retallick & Miller, 2010). In addition to fostering professional growth, self-reflection, and the development of a professional identity (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Packard, 2003), high-quality field experiences strengthen partnerships between preparation programs and PK–12 schools, aligning professional training with the evolving demands of educational systems (Arman & Scherer, 2002; Petti, 2013).

A project-based field experience (PBFE) provides teacher education candidates with a Stage 3 (pre-student teaching) experience with children/adolescents in a setting(s) outside of the typical classroom. PBFEs can occur in Instructional I and Educational Specialist I programs during the Stage 3 field experience.

Through project-based field experience, the candidate will have the opportunity to apply competencies related to the cognition, behavior, and development of typical and atypical learners, as well as competencies related to motivational strategies and managing a learning environment in various settings.

General Based Design and Delivery

The project-based field experience is one in which the candidate is placed in an environment outside of the regular classroom or school day learning environment, (e.g., museums, clubs, youth centers, state parks, summer day programs, social case work, etc.) where they will take on some of the responsibilities of the leader, under supervision of a mentor/preceptor. The project will offer the candidate an opportunity to work with learners in settings outside of typical classrooms, thus providing opportunity to enhance perspectives on the factors that underlay and affect student motivation, interest, performance, etc.

The candidate defines a goal for the project-based field experience related to the application of any number of required professional core competencies from the Program Guidelines. Through a project planning guide and monitoring/feedback from a mentor/preceptor, the candidate will be evaluated on his/her growth in understanding the related professional core competencies. A summative statement written by the candidate about the impact of the PBFE will become part of an exit portfolio.

The project-based field experience, like all other field experiences, is not a for-pay experience and is not completed as part of a candidate's employment. The project-based field experience is

offered as an option to completing a portion (up to 75 hours) of the required 150 hours of Stage 3 placement inside a classroom while gaining relevant experience in the social, cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral development of children/adolescents.

Project-based field experiences require a minimum placement of 25 hours and may extend up to 75 of the required 150 hours of Stage 3 field experiences.

Project-based field experiences will contain experiential similarities to more standard pre-student teaching field experiences, with some adjustments based on the setting, the learning atmosphere, and the length of the project as the following list suggests. More specific examples are described below.

- Assist other professionals who either work with children/adolescents (museums, social agency) or in a content-related industry (factory tours)
- Development and use of artifacts. Creating learning materials (e.g., brochures and exhibits etc.) suited for the particular age group and then using them with the children/adolescents. This project must include direct work with children/adolescents and evaluation of the effectiveness of materials developed.
- Development of age-appropriate activities at an alternative site (e.g., outdoor education center, summer playground, hospital pediatric center)
- Participation in an EPP with an approved music education program or community-sponsored choral/musical ensembles, orchestras, or performances which encourage community participation and demonstrate instructional knowledge of music education.⁴
- Presentation (e.g., student groups touring a museum)
- Whole class or small group instruction/management over a series of days (e.g., after school clubs, youth athletic coaching, etc.)

Due to the nature of project-based field experiences, some of the projects may be scheduled to occur during a time period that is outside of the actual course in which it is embedded (i.e., during summer or holiday breaks).

Examples of Project-Based Field Experiences

The following are a few ideas of placements that could become part of the project-based field experience. The activities are suggestions and their level of complexity will depend on the amount of time that the candidate spends in the placement and the particular activities that are open to them. The expectations of assessment, similarly, will depend upon the length and structure of the particular placement.

⁴ Exception for Approved Music Education Preparation Programs

Example Placement A:

Hospital – **In-patient adolescent psychiatric unit**

Theme:

Mental Health experience of adolescents and how it impacts learning

Key skills:

Structure and provision of mental health system to adolescents

- Empathetic interaction with adolescents at varying stages of mental illness
- Mental health diagnosis overview (maybe an understanding of one or two, i.e., depression, bi-polar disorder, ADHD, eating/dysmorphic disorders, suicidality, anti-social behavioral disorders) and how that impacts learning

Activities:

Direct contact

- Assist in general running of unit
- Attend formal group therapeutic sessions
- Assist in provision of social activities and informal therapeutic sessions (e.g., games and outings)
- Conduct interview with selected patients (e.g., social, educational history)
- Observe and assist in classroom/education department (may include lead or co-teaching lessons, as appropriate)

Indirect contact

- Attend case conferences and staffing meetings
- Assist in planning of social and therapeutic activities
- Assist in development of teaching plans
- Liaison with home/school personnel
- Interview with key individuals (e.g., child psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse, social worker/therapist, teacher)
- Research into selected relevant psychiatric disorders (see key skills above)

Prerequisites:

- Understanding of ethical behavior and confidentiality issues (within institution, between agencies, between patients, HIPAA-FERPA, etc.)

Evaluation:

- Time/activity log
- Reports from mentor and selected staff (e.g., teacher)

- Case study of student(s) including understanding of clinical, social and educational aspects of their diagnosis. May also include social history and interview.
- Reports of therapeutic, social and educational activities completed, indicating the candidate's role (e.g., participant observer, observed, assisted, led)
- Artifacts – e.g., Directory of local mental health resources, informational brochure developed for educators, students or parents

Example Placement B:

Township Parks and Recreation – Summer Youth Program

Theme:

How the recreation experiences of children impacts socialization and educational achievement

Key skills:

- Planning and leadership of summer leisure activities for children
- Empathetic interaction with adolescents
- Appropriate use of leadership and authority in structured and semi-structured activity program
- Understand how to engage students without coercion

Activities:

Direct contact

- Assist in general running of program
- Assist and/or direct selected activities
- Conduct interviews with selected participants (e.g., social, educational history) to understand the context and benefits of summer programming for youth
- Address issues related to diversity and needs of special groups within participant population

Indirect contact

- Attend planning and staffing meetings
- Assist in development of teaching plans. Align plans with perceived developmental level(s) of participants.
- Liaison with participants' parents/guardians (as appropriate)
- Interview with key individuals (e.g., center leader, community police officer, parent, administrator from local school)

Prerequisites:

- Understanding of ethical behavior and confidentiality issues (within institution, between agencies, with parents, participants, etc.)

Evaluation:

- Time/activity log
- Reports from mentor and selected staff
- Case study of student(s) including understanding of social and cultural background and value of summer programming to their social and educational success
- Reports of social and educational activities completed, indicating candidate's role (e.g., participated, planned, observed, assisted, led)
- Artifacts – e.g., Informational brochure developed for educators, students or parents

The Project and the Responsibilities of the Candidate

Like standard field experiences, the project's ultimate aim is to help prepare the candidate to deliver standards-based education in a standards aligned system. However, candidates will complete a project that can only be accomplished through participation in the project-based field experience.

The project is developed in conjunction with the professional core competencies included in the coursework within each certification program. Aligning the site, learning objectives/outcomes, teaching competencies, standards, and assessments early in the process will be the key to success in making the project-based field work.

The EPP may suggest example projects, but candidates should be encouraged to modify the design of the project or develop a different project—one that meets the same requirements. The project plan will be subject to an advisory process which may lead to revision.

Each project should be aligned with one or more professional core competencies and should seek to gain insight into an area of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, social, and/or physical development. The candidate will demonstrate that these competencies and areas may be better understood through the project than through a traditional in-school placement. Projects should also seek to create an opportunity for candidates to design, implement, and assess some aspect of learning with the participants. Since this is a Stage 3 field experience, it is expected that the primary participants be within the age range of the intended certificate, i.e., Secondary Education certification candidates work primarily with students of ages corresponding with grades 7-12.

Student's Initial Concept Proposal

Project-based field experience should allow candidates to create a project within a structure provided by the IHE and the field experience site. The structure includes three phases:

- 1) Proposal
- 2) Implementation
- 3) Assessment.

The first phase allows the candidate to identify a potential site and submit an outline of the proposed PBFE. This Initial Concept Proposal allows the Program Provider (PP) supervisor(s) and the field experience site supervisor to identify any major barriers related to implementation of

the project in the earliest phases of development. Upon approval by the field experience site supervisor and the PP supervisor, the candidate develops a full proposal for the experience. This proposal will include a more detailed description of the learning goals, planned activities, and intended outcomes for the field experience. The proposal will also include copies of the rubric(s) to be used to assess the learning outcomes.

Program Supervision

The supervision of a project-based field experience is similar to supervision of other Stage 3 field experiences. In Stage 3, the EPP provider may provide supervision; however, formal supervision is not required. If supervision occurs, these supervision hours are not the hours utilized to complete the PDE 430.

The EPP will develop a performance rubric to assess the candidate's application of professional competencies, i.e., the project. At the beginning of the PBFE, the site mentor will sign off on the project plan and the rubric, affirming that the standards of quality performance are known.

Feedback on candidate's performance using the rubric will be completed by the mentor/preceptor or EPP supervisor (optional).

Evaluation

Project-based field experiences will be evaluated on the basis of professional growth evidenced by the candidate throughout the duration of the experience. Examples of products that evidence professional growth include:

- Guided reflection logs
- Video or other artifacts
- Presentation to classmates
- A Statement of Impact, focusing on how the experience affected the candidate's insight into instruction, student motivation, group/individual management, content relevance, confidentiality, empathy, and diversity

The Program determines the type of assessment that best demonstrates the candidate's professional growth. Course credits for the course in which the PBFE is embedded should await the completion of the project.

Assessment Activities for Project-Based Field Experiences

The project-based field experience option often entails the use of non-traditional settings and non-traditional tasks to meet the field experience requirement. Emphasis is placed upon meeting core competencies related to standards in the education area of focus for the candidate participating in these experiences.

Responsibilities of the EPP

A memorandum of understanding should be used to document the expectations agreed upon between the project site, candidate, mentor/preceptor, and the Program.

Programs will be responsible for investigating specific clearances, entrance requirements, and behavioral expectations that candidates need prior to beginning the field experience. Programs will share those requirements with candidates. The Program will develop and maintain a list of possible sites/mentors available.

Programs will provide training to partner sites and mentors participating in the project-based field experiences.

Appendix B: Cyber School Student Teaching Competencies

Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has developed a general set of student teaching competencies that afford a student teacher the opportunity to complete no greater than 50% of their student teaching experience in a cyber-school.

Criteria for Cyber Schools to Host Student Teaching Candidates

Placement of candidates in a cyber-school for part of a student teaching experience is an option program providers may choose for their candidates. Student teaching in a cyber-school setting cannot exceed 50% of the student teaching placement. Participating cyber schools must meet specific criteria to ensure the most comprehensive learning environment for the candidate. The following standards must be used to determine an acceptable placement site:

1. Candidates are placed in a public cyber school that serves a diverse student population.
2. Candidates are placed in sites that allow for a broad set of interactions with students.
3. Candidates are placed in sites that allow a broad set of interactions with PA certified and highly qualified teachers and administrators serving as qualified site mentors.
4. Candidates need to meet at least 50% of the competencies during the cyber school placement for the placement to be successful.
5. The cyber setting is in an office providing a professional work area, not a home.
6. The curriculum delivered is dynamic, indicating a high level of student engagement, and is approved by a school district or other body with the authority for such approval.
7. Candidates are provided with the opportunity to alter the instruction and create lesson plans and assessments to fit the needs of the learner.
8. Candidates are provided with the opportunity to create an instructional plan as determined by the teacher education program provider.
9. Candidates are able to work with diverse learners.
10. Candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to create of a positive learning environment through interactions with students in the cyber setting.
11. Candidates are given the opportunity to interact with students and families in real time.
12. Candidates are able to conduct synchronous instruction.
13. Candidates are provided opportunities to participate in any orientation, professional development, and meetings required of the cyber school faculty.
14. Candidates are provided with the opportunity to work with the families of students and participate in any training the Cyber School offers to families and professional staff.
15. University supervision is analogous to the supervision and observation provided to candidates in traditional, on-the-ground settings.
16. Guidelines for supervision include all components of supervision both on-site and electronic including opportunities to provide feedback at the time of planning as well as during actual instruction.
17. A cyber school permits the program provider access to the online instruction for the purpose of monitoring the delivery of instruction.

Candidate Competencies

Cyber School student teaching competencies are applicable across all Instructional I certifications. It is expected that program providers will follow program guidelines to assure appropriate conditions for placement of candidates for student teaching in each program of study. Candidates should have the opportunity to gain experiences that allow them to practice, develop and demonstrate competencies and to address the broad set of issues, knowledge and competencies that are relevant to teaching and learning. Program candidates should be provided with a broad set of meaningful interactions with Pre-K-12 students and professional staff, as well as willing and qualified mentors. Candidates should be provided with frequent program provider supervision, and collaborative partnerships between the program provider and the local education agency.

I. Planning and Preparation

Candidates will demonstrate ability to:

- A. Link content to related research-based pedagogy based on sound educational psychology principles in short- and long-range instructional plans.
- B. Construct all instructional plans to align with Pennsylvania Pre-K-12 Academic Standards.
- C. Plan instruction that is responsive to the age and/or related characteristics of their students.
- D. Use multiple forms of formative and summative assessments to adapt learning goals that match individual student needs.
- E. Plan short-and long range instruction using appropriate resources, materials, technology and activities to engage students in meaningful learning, based on their instructional goals.
- F. Assess existing resources and creates and/or accesses additional instructional resources appropriate for learners under their responsibility.

II. Classroom Environment

Candidates will demonstrate ability to:

- A. Maintains and promotes a culture which values the development of meaningful, caring, and respectful relationships between teacher and students, and among students.
- B. Creates and maintains a prepared virtual classroom environment as a necessary element to support optimal learning opportunities.
- C. Uses virtual classroom resources to support equity and maximize learning opportunities, which are age, gender, individually, culturally and ability appropriate.
- D. Assesses virtual classroom resources in order to make adaptations and accommodations required to differentiate instruction for all learners.
- E. Engages in proactive communication with families and community contacts.
- F. Develops and/or supports systems for student transitions, as well as procedures and routines for instructional and non-instructional responsibilities.

III. Instructional Delivery

Candidates will demonstrate ability to:

- A. Uses effective verbal and non-verbal communication techniques.
- B. Uses effective questioning and discussion techniques.
- C. Uses a variety of age, gender, individually, culturally, ability- and skill appropriate instructional strategies which reflect evidence of student engagement, new learning and assessment.
- D. Uses instructional technology and assesses its impact on student learning.
- E. Provides appropriate progress feedback to students in a timely manner.
- F. Uses active student engagement during instructional delivery.
- G. Uses a variety of formal and informal assessments to measure student responsiveness to instruction.
- H. Constructs a thoughtful and accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which learning goals were achieved and can offer alternative actions if necessary.
- I. Actively seeks, and is responsive to, constructive feedback offered by the cooperating teacher and university supervisor.
- J. Clearly communicates instructional goals, procedures, and content.
- K. Accesses communication technologies to communicate with families regarding student progress.

IV. Professional Conduct

Candidate will demonstrate ability to:

- A. Communicates with the cooperating teacher regarding instructional and non-instructional record keeping, procedures and routines, and timelines; including, but not limited to, grading, attendance, lesson plans, parent communication, and inter-school needs and assumes these responsibilities as permitted.
- B. Participates in district, college, regional, state and/or national professional development growth and development opportunities.
- C. Exhibits integrity, ethical behavior and professional conduct as stated in the "Pennsylvania Code of Professional Practice & Conduct for Educators," as well as local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- D. Avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct and contact with students.
- E. Applies safety precautions and procedures.
- F. Complies with school policies and procedures regarding professional dress, attendance, punctuality and the use of technology.
- G. Cultivates professional relationships with school colleagues, families and the broader community; and avoids inappropriate relationships, conduct, and contact with colleagues, families and the broader community.

V. Assessment

Candidates will demonstrate their ability to:

- A. Uses various kinds of assessments in instruction, including formative, summative, benchmark, behavioral, diagnostic, cognitive, affective and psychomotor.
- B. Makes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations of assessment results.
- C. Applies interpretations to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- D. Applies interpretations of status Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and growth Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS) assessment models to inform planning and instruction for groups and individual students.
- E. Constructs assessments to match cognitive, affective, behavioral and/or psychomotor curricular goals.
- F. Constructs assessments to match curricular goals along a continuum of complexity (e.g. Bloom's taxonomy).
- G. Assesses their own professional growth through focused self-reflection.

VI. Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Candidates will demonstrate ability to:

- A. Appropriately responds to the unique characteristics and learning needs of diverse learners (age, gender, culture or ability) in the virtual classroom.
- B. Promotes a positive learning environment that values and fosters respect for all students.
- C. Differentiates instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners that promotes successful educational performance.
- D. Supports the growth and development of all students, particularly those traditionally underserved.
- E. Communicates with and engages families, caregivers and the broader community.

Faculty

Faculty who supervise candidates in their Cyber Student teaching experience must have expertise in teaching online, expertise in education methods as well as advanced degrees in disciplines appropriate to teaching in the program. Evidence of qualification includes related academic degrees, public school certification(s), professional experience in basic (Pre K-12) and/or higher education, and professional development pertaining to the competencies assigned to a course (similar to 22 Pa. Code § 354.25 and 354.26).