

Department of Teacher Education Valdosta State University



Mentor Handbook 2025-2026



Valdosta State University (VSU) Mentor Educator Guidelines

Information, Schedule, and Evaluations

Congratulations! You have been chosen as a mentor educator because you have shown excellence in your profession and have a desire and willingness to mentor a candidate! Mentoring is one-on-one, individualized support of a future or new educator that involves collaboration, inquiry, and reflection. Your involvement this semester is vital to the development of our future educators.

All clinical practice mentor educators must have at least 3 years of P-12 teaching experience in the field in which they are mentoring. Mentors are selected based on recommendations from their administration as well as meeting the criteria for selection¹. Strong supervisory experience and mentor training is preferred.

Research clearly indicates that the mentor educator has the most influence on the candidate during the clinical practice experience. Your role is demanding, but also rewarding, as you guide the candidate during the transition from student to professional educator. Much of what the candidate learns during this experience will be modeled after you, so it is important that you model effective instructional strategies and encourage the candidate to try them also. Hopefully, you will learn from the candidate as well!

Clinical practice is probably the most valuable part of a training program, and the guidance provided by mentor educators is invaluable. Please accept the appreciation of the faculty of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services for the outstanding job you do in helping us to prepare future educators.



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT APPLICABLE TO ALL FIELD EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

There are federal and state laws that protect the privacy rights of students and families. In a school situation, there are many instances in which confidential information is discussed in order to better understand students and help them. When working in schools, there may be times when this information is discussed; as a pre-service teacher candidate, you must agree that you will not repeat this outside of the school. This will ensure the protection of the students' interest and their families, thus creating a better environment for all.

By signing this document, you agree to the following statement.

It is my professional and ethical obligation to adhere to the confidentiality of student data, testing information, and other private information during all field experiences while enrolled at Valdosta State University. I agree to honor the privacy and confidentiality regarding data and discussions involving students, staff, and other school-related issues. I understand the data and discussion shared during all courses and coursework during my program courses are for academic and professional purposes only. I will not disclose this confidential information to any persons other than school officials that have legitimate educational interests in the educational records and data shared or created during this semester. I also understand I will not post, share, or stream photos or videos related to students to social media of any type.

PRINT NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

ALL TEACHER CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN.

This mentor educator packet includes information and requirements about orientation for the teacher candidate, planning/teaching expectations, solo teaching, evaluation of the candidates, and evaluation of the VSU supervisor.

All forms (evaluations of the candidate and evaluation of the VSU supervisor) will be completed online; **instructions are given later in this packet.** If you have any questions about your evaluations, please reach out to your candidate's assigned supervisor or contact Donna Marshall at dbmarshall@valdosta.edu.

¹Criteria for Mentor Selection

- At least 3 years of P-12 teaching experience as a certified educator in the area in which he/she will be mentoring
- Current knowledge of teaching styles and philosophies
- A valid, clear renewable professional educator certificate in the field in which he/she teaches and the teacher candidate is being prepared
- A commitment to educator professional development and to making a positive contribution to the cooperating school/university partnership
- Ability to serve as a positive role model for the candidate by providing opportunities for continual feedback and reflection
- Willingness to commit the extra time and effort needed
- Compliance with all requirements regarding the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators
- Proficiency in the use of instructional technology in the classroom

Orientation for the Candidate

The orientation is important to help the candidate and VSU supervisor know the procedures you use with students, your teaching schedule, school policies for educators and students, and much more. The orientation activities may take place over the first few days of the clinical practice experience and should include:

- Providing access to the teacher/educator handbook or other documents which explain policies, rules, and regulations of the school or system.
- Providing a work place for the candidate and any instructional materials and textbooks that will be needed by the candidate to plan his/her instructional activities.
- Explaining the composition of the class(es) and calling attention to such factors as specific needs of students with exceptionalities as well as any other matters that are important for the candidate to know.
- Discussing the lesson plan format to be used and establishing deadlines when lesson plans will be due to you for review. **Note: If plans are not submitted on time or if they are not of acceptable quality, the candidate should NOT be permitted to teach, and the VSU supervisor should be notified.**
- Providing opportunities for the candidate to become familiar with pertinent resources in the library, media center, and elsewhere.

Planning and Teaching Expectations

As quickly as possible, you should encourage the candidate to assist you in classroom procedures and activities, which will begin to prepare him/her to assume some professional responsibilities. ***Co-teaching is perfectly acceptable and encouraged! You, the mentor, NEVER have to leave your classroom.*** How

soon the candidate assumes teaching responsibility is dependent on his/her performance during this time of assisting you. This transition should be planned in such a way that both you and the candidate feel confident in increasing the amount of responsibility. The P-12 students in your classes should always be given first consideration to ensure that any changes do not adversely affect them. Other factors to consider during this transition of professional responsibilities are:

- Involving the candidate with the classes as you are teaching to help the candidate become more comfortable in dealing with the students, become more familiar with curricular expectations, and develop his/her “educator presence.”
- Identifying clearly the lesson plan format you want from the candidate and deadlines for submitting lesson plans. Discuss GPS/GSE/QCC requirements or other critical aspects of the lessons that he/she will be planning. You are invaluable to the candidate as he/she prepares those first plans--how to get the students engaged, how to check if they learned what was taught, and much, much more. The candidate’s plans should include sufficient detail to demonstrate that he/she is well prepared and also permit you to confirm that expected curricular/instructional objectives are being met. Your review and feedback of the lesson plans is critical in helping the candidate to achieve success as the plans are implemented!
- Reviewing any tests developed by the candidate prior to their administration. After tests are given, the candidate should review the results and grading procedures with you. This could be the basis for reflection by the candidate on which instructional activities were effective and which ones could be improved.
- Reviewing the lesson plans and discussing them with the candidate prior to their implementation should include feedback on how the plans meet GELDS/GSE standards, any expected local outcomes (learning targets, success criteria, etc.), how to engage the students more effectively (making connections), and how to sequence instruction and assess student learning effectively.
- Helping the candidate use data gathered from various assessments to guide and plan instruction.
- Providing feedback frequently! Clinical practice is a learning experience, and the candidates have been told to expect feedback and constructive criticism from you on their teaching performance. Encourage the candidate to reflect on his/her plans, performance, and help him/her consider ways to improve. A regularly scheduled time to discuss the candidate’s progress is highly recommended. If at all possible, avoid correcting the candidate in front of the class. However, if the candidate struggles with content, you should step in to avoid confusion for the P-12 students. Feedback and coaching are essential to the teacher candidates’ continued growth.

Solo Teaching/Co-Teaching

Candidates are required to complete 500 hours in their clinical practice experience. Candidates are expected to solo teach a full class/case load for a minimum of three weeks. Each department will have guidelines depending on the departmental requirements for solo teaching, but **three weeks is the minimum college requirement**. The timing of this solo teaching and the length of it are dependent on the performance of the candidate. During this time, you may co-teach, small group teach, or use any model you wish that best fits your class needs; however, the candidate should be responsible for planning and implementing the plan. ***Mentor teachers are never required to leave the classroom.***

After the solo period, you might wish to try a different model; or there may be a gradual shift of the teaching back to you full time. In any of these cases, the decision should be a collaborative one based on discussions with the candidate and VSU supervisor. The optimal experience for the candidate would be to have as much time conducting the class full-time as possible. Of course, the discretion is left up to the mentor educator and the VSU supervisor.

Evaluation of the Teacher Candidate

You will be providing constant feedback to the teacher candidate as you work together and as the teacher candidate begins to assist you with various classroom activities. We suggest daily communication with your teacher candidate discussing strengths and weaknesses. **Honesty is the best policy!** Most of the feedback you provide to the teacher candidate will be informal, but you are expected to complete two formal formative evaluations culminating in a collaborative summative evaluation and share these results with the teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor. Mentor teachers should use the [CAPS and PBDA](#)

[User Guide](#) rubrics to assist with evaluations. These evaluations are collected by VSU to provide information about the overall performance of our teacher candidates within and across departments. These evaluations will be completed online via the website Anthology Portfolio. The evaluation materials are located at the following website:

<https://tinyurl.com/VSUCP>

Initial Formative Evaluation - This should occur as early in the semester as possible (a week or two) after the teacher candidate has started any teaching responsibilities. High expectations should be established during this initial formative evaluation to identify strengths as well as areas needing improvement. In fact, the scoring on this evaluation should be relatively low since the teacher candidate is just beginning. Two evaluations are submitted at this time: the Candidate Assessment on Performance Standards (CAPS)/Intern Keys assessment and the Professional Behaviors and Dispositions (PBDA) assessment. Please schedule a time to discuss your evaluation results with the teacher candidate; be sure to include in your discussion ways in which the teacher candidate can improve his/her performance. Solicit feedback from the VSU supervisor regarding his/her evaluations of the teacher candidate. **Please submit your initial formative evaluation online by the due date listed on the schedule.**

Mid-Point Check In - There will be a formal or informal evaluation completed at mid-point during clinical practice facilitated by the VSU supervisor and determined by each program. Some programs and VSU supervisors may visit more than twice and use additional departmental evaluation forms during these observations to evaluate the teacher candidate. The VSU supervisor may also ask you to complete an additional CAPS or PBDA evaluation or collaborate with him/her on completing them. These efforts are all to ensure the teacher candidate will be a successful educator upon program completion.

Summative Evaluation - After consulting with you and the teacher candidate near the end of the clinical practice experience, the [VSU supervisor](#) will complete and submit the summative evaluation online. While these evaluations are submitted online, we realize that many more evaluations/observations do occur during the semester by the mentor educator, teacher candidate, and the VSU supervisor. Please share these with your teacher candidate and the VSU supervisor.

Overall Grade -- The clinical practice experience is graded as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” The VSU supervisor should solicit your input regarding the teacher candidate’s overall performance; however, the final grade for the teacher candidate is ultimately the responsibility of the VSU supervisor.

Evaluation of the VSU Supervisor and Clinical Practice

Near the end of the placement, you will be asked to complete an evaluation on the VSU supervisor who you worked with during the semester as well as the clinical practice experience. This information is important to help us improve the supervision process. Results of these evaluations are shared with supervisors only AFTER the placement is completed. Please complete this online form by the due date listed online. You will receive an email from Anthology Portfolio once the form opens near the end of the semester.

Survey for Program Improvement

Near the end of the placement, you will be able to complete an evaluation on the candidate's overall performance and readiness to solo teach. This information is important to help us improve preparation programs, and results of these evaluations are shared with program faculty only AFTER the placement is completed. Please complete this online form by the due date listed online. You will receive an email from Anthology Portfolio once the form opens near the end of the semester.

Grievances

The College of Education and Human Services and the partner school agree that any situation in which the teacher candidate has a concern that he or she would like to formally pursue, the candidate should follow the protocol to ensure proper communication which follows the chain of command: (1) Mentor Teacher, (2) University Supervisor, (3) Supervisor Coordinator, (4) Associate Department Head, (5) Department Head (6) Dean.

Questions

If you have questions regarding this information or your experience, you can contact the VSU supervisor assigned to your teacher candidate, the Supervisor Coordinator, Donna Marshall, the Teacher Education Associate Department Head, Dr. Gayle Ramirez, or the teacher education Department Head, Dr. Joseph Jones (jjones5@valdosta.edu) You may also reach out to the placement office by contacting, Melissa Nolley (mmnolley@valdosta.edu) or Susan Walden, Director, Office of Professional Education Services (swalden@valdosta.edu).

Mentor Educator Checklist

As the mentor educator, I:

- _____ Provided orientation activities to prepare candidate (such as school policies, materials, classroom procedures, established work place for candidate, and so forth).
- _____ Discussed lesson planning, format, and deadlines for plans to be submitted with candidate.
- _____ Met with VSU supervisor for orientation session.
- _____ Discussed beginning of teaching responsibility with candidate.
- _____ Asked the candidate to do a self-evaluation soon after he/she began teaching and to discuss the results with me.
- _____ Completed the initial formative evaluation (CAPS/Intern Keys & PBDA for teaching fields) online and discussed it with the teacher candidate and VSU supervisor. Continued to encourage the candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- _____ Maintained regularly scheduled interactions with candidate about planning, teaching, discipline, and so forth.
- _____ Scheduled solo teaching schedule (minimum of three weeks) and reviewed expectations that should take place during this time.
- _____ Continued to encourage candidate to reflect on his/her performance.
- _____ Discussed candidate's progress with VSU supervisor and solicited feedback.
- _____ Discussed with the candidate his/her activities after the solo teaching period; this could include shared teaching responsibilities and team teaching.
- _____ Met with VSU supervisor and candidate to discuss overall, summative performance of candidate.
- _____ Completed the Mentor Teacher Evaluation of VSU Supervisor & Clinical Practice and Survey for Program Improvement evaluations online (teaching fields only).

STUDENT TEACHING SCHEDULE

Fall 2025

The following dates are *guidelines* given to teacher candidates for picking up classes. There may be a slight variance in the schedule due to differences in school calendars or special needs of your individual classroom. Your VSU Candidate's Supervisor will need to approve any changes to the schedule. All candidates are encouraged to begin when their assigned school returns.

REQUIREMENTS	Week in Semester	RECOMMENDED DATES
Orientation, adjustment, schedule meet and greet, develop lesson plans, learn students' names, determine school's videotaping policy, model teach, and develop curriculum outline.	Week 1	August 18 - 22
Assume responsibility (with your mentor teacher's guidance) for planning and teaching 1 class/subject .	Week 2-3	August 25 – September 5
Assume responsibility for planning and teaching one additional class (2 classes/subjects).	Week 4-5	September 8-19
Assume responsibility for planning and teaching one additional class (3 classes/subjects).	Week 6	September 22-26
Assume responsibility for planning and teaching one additional class (4 classes/subjects).	Week 7	September 29 – October 3
Assume responsibility for planning and teaching one additional class (5 classes/subjects).	Week 8	October 6-10
Solo - During solo teaching you are required to plan and teach all assigned classes for five weeks. A co-teaching model is encouraged and acceptable at any time during solo teaching. Your mentor teacher will remain in the classroom, but will allow you to have full responsibility for the planning and teaching of all assigned classes. You will begin releasing responsibility back to your mentor.	Week 9-14	October 13 – November 21
Support your mentor teaching in any way they request, but the mentor will be taking over the majority of teaching. Options: If approved by your mentor teacher, you may observe additional classrooms on your campus, schedule interviews, visit other classes.	Week 15	December 1 - 5
Last day for candidates in schools. Any time missed must be made up after this date.		December 5
Graduation		December 13

Fall 2025 Clinical Practice Schedule

First Day of Clinical Practice: Monday, August 18, 2025

All candidates are encouraged to begin their placement during the placement school's pre-planning.

Initial Formative Observations & Evaluation

Completed: **September 5 – October 3**

Observation/Evaluation Documents:

- 1) Candidate Assessment of Performance Standards (CAPS)/Intern Keys Form
- 2) Professional Behaviors and Dispositions (PBDA) Form

Evaluation documents (CAPS & PBDA) are due from each of the following:

- 1) Pre-service Teacher Candidate
- 2) Mentor Teacher
- 3) VSU Field Supervisor

Due Date: Upload Completed Documents to Anthology*

Friday October 3, 2025, by 3:00 p.m.

Mid-Point Check In

The Mid-Point Check In is at the discretion of the Mentor and Faculty Supervisor. The Team will determine if additional documentation is needed such as CAPS and/or PBDA.

VSU Semester Mid-Term Date: 10/9/2025

Fall Break Holiday: Candidate will follow school placement calendar

Exit Forms

Due from Teacher Candidate	Due Date
Teacher Candidate Evaluation of Supervisor	Friday, November 14, 2025, by 3pm
Teacher Candidate Evaluation of Mentor Teacher	Friday, November 14, 2025, by 3pm
Survey for Program Improvement (SPI)	Friday, November 14, 2025, by 3pm

Due from Mentor Teacher	Due Date
Mentor Evaluation of VSU Supervisor	Friday, November 14, 2025, by 3pm
Survey for Program Improvement (SPI)	Friday, November 14, 2025, by 3pm

Summative Evaluation Observations

Observation & Collaboration Completed: **November 7 – December 5**

Observation/Evaluation Documents:

- 1) Candidate Assessment of Performance Standards (CAPS)/Intern Keys Form
- 2) Professional Behaviors and Dispositions (PBDA) Form
 - Summative Evaluation Documents are completed in collaboration w/ Candidate, Mentor Teacher, and Field Supervisor.
 - Summative documents are uploaded in Anthology* by the VSU Field Supervisor ONLY

Due Date: Completed Documents to Anthology* Friday December 8, 2025, by 3:00 p.m

*Anthology Upload Directions can be found: <https://tinyurl.com/VSUCP>