

Standard 7: Field Experience and Clinical Practice

Standard 7.1

The *unit* and its *partners* design, implement, and regularly *evaluate* a planned sequence of *field-based* and *clinical experiences* in order for *candidates* to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to educate and *support* all *students* effectively so that *P-12 students* meet state-adopted academic standards.

Preparing teachers is the joint work of the university and the schools where candidates complete their field placements. As we discuss below, STEP works closely with its clinical partners (in the summer school and academic-year placements) to plan, implement, and evaluate candidates' field experiences.

A. OVERVIEW OF THE DESIGN OF CLINICAL EXPERIENCES IN STEP

We first describe the design of the clinical experiences for teacher candidates STEP, organized to support candidates development and demonstration of the knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful beginning teacher (this section). We later describe the ways in which we collaborate with our school-based partners in the design, implementation, evaluation of these experiences (see “**B. COLLABORATION WITH PARTERS IN SUPPPORT OF CLINICAL EXPERIENCES.**”)

STEP offers a clinically-based, clinically-rich program experience for teacher candidates in all of its programs. From the second week of the program (late June or early July) until the end of the academic year the following spring, candidates spend approximately 20 hours per week in local public school, mentored by experienced classroom teachers, and supported by expert university supervisors.

Summer School Experience

The clinical experience in STEP begins with a summer school experience STEP designs, implements, and evaluates in close collaboration with the [Sunnyvale School District](#).

The school district offers two summer school programs for its pupils: one at a Columbia Middle School and the other at Bishop Elementary. STEP offers a summer clinical experiences for all of its Single Subject candidates at Columbia Middle school and for all of its Multiple Subject candidates (including bilingual) at Bishop elementary. The summer school programs offer candidates access to classroom experiences from their earliest days in STEP--a place to consider and begin to implement ideas and approaches encountered in STEP summer courses; an opportunity to being developing knowledge and skills in working with diverse students; an opportunity to learn from observation and mentoring from experienced classroom teachers and university supervisors; and an opportunity to being learning how to support K-12 students to meet state adopted academic standards. Candidates consistently report that the summer schools provide

meaningful field experiences (see STEP [Elementary Summer School Report/Secondary Summer School Report](#)).

Academic Year Clinical Experience

STEP teacher candidates complete a full academic year clinical experience in our partnering schools.

In August candidates begin student teaching placements in carefully selected and supported schools around the Bay Area. Typically, Single Subject candidates complete a year-long field placement at one school where they spend approximately twenty hours per week, with some variation for schools with block schedules or non-traditional calendars. Multiple Subject (all) candidates divide the academic year between two field placements, one from August through December and the other from January to June. Together these placements provide candidates with experience with students at different grade levels and stages of development. Similar to their Single Subject counterparts, Multiple Subject candidates (all) spend approximately 20 hours per week in their field placements.

In their placements, candidates observe classrooms, plan and implement learning segments, design curriculum units, practice various pedagogical approaches, assess student work, and reflect on their practice. Candidates' responsibilities in their placements increase in scope and complexity throughout the school year (see [Graduated Responsibility](#) document). The STEP website provides an overview of the required field experiences for [Single Subject](#) and [Multiple Subject \(all\)](#) candidates.

In the 2013-14 school year, 76 Single Subject candidates were placed in 22 local high schools, and 23 Multiple Subject (all) candidates were placed in 11 local K-8 schools, usually in clusters of two to eight candidates per school. In the 2014-15 year, 63 Single Subject candidates were placed in 27 local high schools, and 23 Multiple Subject (all) candidates were placed in 13 local K-8 schools, also in clusters of two to eight candidates per school. (See listing of clinical placement sites ([2013-14](#), [2014-15](#), [2015-16](#)).

Mentoring and Supervision

In both their summer and academic year experiences, candidates are matched with experience classroom teachers (called "cooperating teachers" in STEP), as well as university based supervisors (referred to as "supervisors" in STEP). These clinical personnel work as a team to support the candidates' growth and development as professional educators, by offering regular observation, feedback, evaluation, and support.

B. COLLABORATION WITH PARTERS IN SUPPPORT OF DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION OF CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

STEP's Elementary and Secondary faculty directors and STEP's director of clinical work collaborate to develop and maintain strong, cooperative relationships between the unit and it's schools partners. STEP works closely with K-12 partners to design clinical

experiences that provide ongoing opportunities for candidates to work with diverse K-12 students and to collaborate with experienced classroom teachers. Together the directors also coordinate field placements in collaboration with partnering schools and districts. Specifically,

- **Selecting cooperating teachers** - School site administrators help identify cooperating teachers who will be able to effectively collaborate with and mentor student teachers. Site administrators recommend teachers from their faculty whom they think demonstrate qualities of effective instruction and mentoring. Then, in consultation between site administrator and STEP director of clinical work, potential cooperating teachers are identified and encouraged to consider the position. Then the STEP director of clinical work and/or STEP clinical associates [observe](#) a potential cooperating teacher to ascertain the possibility of a good fit. Finally, the STEP director of clinical work confers with school and/or district administrators before making final selections on cooperating teachers.
- **Matching teacher candidates and cooperating teachers** – Similarly, the STEP director of clinical work engages school administrators in the process of assigning teacher candidates to cooperating teachers. For example, school and or district administrators are consulting in determining how many placements might be suitable in a given year at a particular site, which teachers are ready or in need of a break, and the like. Eventually, school partners approve a list of suggested pairings offered by the STEP director of clinical work.

Additionally, all cooperating teachers complete a Preliminary Survey ([Secondary/Elementary \(all\)](#)) in which they are asked to describe their working style and the characteristics they seek in a teacher candidate. The STEP director of clinical work solicits teacher candidate feedback via survey, observations, and individual meetings. The director of clinical work, along with the rest of the STEP team, then uses both sets of feedback to match candidates with cooperating teachers. The survey feedback from these key stakeholders is essential to the implementation of the clinical placements. As mentioned before, school administrators are also consulted and review decisions before they are finalized.

- **Defining roles** - STEP seeks to work collaboratively with school partners to define and develop roles, relationships, and expectations relative to the preparation of teaching candidates in their clinical placements. STEP has [MOUs](#) with each placement school or district. These MOUs were created in collaboration and consultation with STEP's clinical partners in order to codify expectations about which partner provides what resources (financial resources, human resources, etc.). MOUs are reviewed and revised at the start of each school year, as needed, to reflect the changing needs of STEP and its partners.
- **Clinical contracts** - Each teacher candidate, along with his/her cooperating teacher and administrator in his/her school placement, signs a [clinical contract](#). The clinical contract details the clearly defined roles and responsibilities of candidates, institutional supervisors, and supervisors in the fieldwork. Like the MOUs, clinical contracts were developed through collaboration with STEP's clinical partners to ensure transparency in the candidate-cooperating teacher relationship. Thus, STEP works with partners to cooperatively establish and

- review the terms and agreements of partnership.
- **Forums for feedback and consultation** – The unit offers a wide range of opportunities for STEP to engage its clinical partners in seeking input in the design and implementation of its programs. These forums include the following:
 - Direct consultation between STEP directors and individual school and district personnel
 - Individual meetings between school-based cooperating teacher and university-based supervisors - University supervisors play a special role in STEP’s clinical model in that they create sustained connections between STEP and the placement sites. University supervisors develop close working relationships with cooperating teachers, and get to know the schools and their students. Supervisors are a key conduit in soliciting input and feedback from school partners on the design, implementation and evaluation of the program
 - School-based team meetings – Typically held at the end of the semester or school year where cooperating teachers and administrators have an opportunity to offer feedback and recommendations
 - STEP sponsored professional development efforts for [supervisors](#) and cooperating teachers, including monthly meetings for Supervisors, [“onboarding” sessions](#) for cooperating teachers in August, [“Dine and Discuss”](#) events for supervisors and cooperating teachers. These professional development sessions for cooperating teachers support their efforts to link their practice with STEP’s [Conceptual Framework](#) and state-adopted standards for teaching and learning. At each professional development session, cooperating teachers give informal feedback on the types of content they would like featured in upcoming sessions, as well as feedback to program personal on the design and implementation of the program.
 - [Superintendents’ forum](#) – An opportunity for [district and CMO leadership](#) to engage in dialogue with STEP faculty and one another around timely issues and to provide feedback on strengths and challenges of school-university partnerships.
 - The Director of Clinical Work participates in round-table meetings with the Assistant Superintendents and Directors of Curriculum at STEP’s partner schools, as well as with the [Silicon Valley Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment \(BTSA\) Induction Program](#). These quarterly meetings are sponsored by the Santa Clara County Office of Education and support collaboration between STEP and partner schools within the county. At these meetings STEP stakeholders provide feedback on the program and ideas for supporting candidates.
 - [Council of Partner School](#) meetings – This forum is currently under review and revision, but historically they have provided an opportunity for key partnering schools to collaborate with one another and with STEP in support of the effective design and operation of both STEP and their schools.

STEP works with its partners to coordinate a range of supports for helping candidates develop and demonstrate their ability to instruct all students. All school partners are consulted throughout the placement process and during the school year to ensure alignment with candidates' needs and the needs and capacity of each school site.

EVALUATION

Throughout the school year teachers and administrators at clinical sites have numerous opportunities—both formal and informal—to provide feedback on and suggestions for improving these partnerships. Stakeholders contribute to the evaluation of STEP in a variety of ways, including:

- At the end of the year, Cooperating Teachers complete the [End-of-Year survey](#) in which they detail the program supports that were helpful during the year, and suggest programmatic changes.
- University supervisors and cooperating teachers also inform the program design through their assessments of candidates' performance in field placements. Similarly, at the end of the summer placement, cooperating teachers complete an [Assessment of Field Placement Experience and Participation](#) for each STEP candidate. STEP staff and faculty use these summer school assessments to identify areas of promise, knowledge gaps, and concerns to be addressed as the candidates prepare for their academic year placements.
- Throughout the year supervisors facilitate three-way meetings with cooperating teachers and teacher candidates, providing opportunities for collective discussions of candidates' clinical experience and performance. University supervisors convey feedback from the field to the STEP directors and bring information from the university to the school sites. Over time, this feedback has influenced the program's selection and advisement of candidates, as we gain more data about how to support both candidates and their supervisors in the field.

Standard 7.2

For each credential and certificate program, the unit collaborates with its partners regarding the criteria for selection of school sites, effective clinical personnel, and site-based supervising personnel.

The selection of school sites, clinical personnel (STEP's "cooperating teachers") and supervising personnel (STEP's "supervisors") are essential elements in the effectiveness of the credential programs in STEP. Below we describe the criteria and procedures used in selecting these key personnel. All of these endeavors are supported via the wide range of consultation and feedback systems described above (see **Standard 7.1**) that offer opportunities for collaboration between STEP and its school-based partners.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SCHOOL SITES

STEP placement schools are selected based on a range of important features. Broadly, STEP's placement schools serve as an essential partner in supporting the [Conceptual Framework](#) and mission of the program, and in supporting the development of the

professional knowledge skills and dispositions of the teacher candidates. With that in mind, STEP works carefully and collaboratively with its school partners in determining the feasibility, value, alignment and potential challenges of any new placement school partnership.

Ideally, STEP seeks placement school that share the following characteristics with its programs:

- A shared commitment to prepare and support teachers to work with all students to achieve intellectually, academically, and socially in equitable schools and classrooms
- Engagement in continual efforts to improve teaching and learning for all students and to narrow the achievement gap
- The prevalence of academically rigorous curricula, and theoretically and empirically supported pedagogical practices
- A professional environment allowing for continuous development of school and university faculty
- Skilled and effective classroom teachers in the necessary subjects
- Supporting diverse students, reflective of California's diverse school population, including significant numbers of English learners and students with identified special needs
- Geographic proximity

STEP works with school, district, and CMO leadership in the development of placement school partnerships. Relationships are built and nurtured over time in collaboration with partners. STEP invests heavily in the resources and personnel necessary to achieve these kinds of mutual partnerships. STEP's faculty and staff maintain close, productive relationships with local schools and districts. The STEP staff position of clinical associate, designed specifically to be a liaison between STEP and its clinical partners, attests to the program's commitment to these relationships. In addition to clinical associates, the director of clinical work is in constant communication with partner sites through formal and informal conversations. In collaboration with our district and school partners, STEP directors and staff select placement sites, cooperating teachers, and clinical personnel who have the capacity to support the growth of developing teachers.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF CLINICAL AND SUPERVISING PERSONNEL

Candidates' field placements with expert **cooperating teachers** reinforce the links between theory and practice, university and school, experience and standards. The program prioritizes the pairing of candidates with cooperating teachers who reflect STEP's vision of teaching and learning. Instead of selecting cooperating teachers based on self-nomination or solely on principals' recommendations, as described above STEP selects cooperating teachers based on direct, first-hand knowledge of their classrooms and teaching practices, in consultation with school leadership. With input from the schools, STEP faculty and supervisors look for evidence that a cooperating teacher's

classroom practices are consistent with STEP's vision of effective teaching. When visiting a potential cooperating teacher, STEP faculty and university supervisors use an observation protocol that allows for rich description of what occurs in the classroom and directs observers to focus carefully upon how learning happens in the classroom (see [School Site Observation Protocol](#)). This protocol asks observers to record examples of student work (if visible), what the climate of the classroom is like, how the goals of the lessons were communicated and assessed, how the teacher found out what the students knew prior to the lesson, and how the needs of different learners were addressed. This process increases the likelihood that candidates are paired with cooperating teachers whose teaching practices reflect and reinforce what candidates are learning in STEP coursework. STEP frequently places candidates with cooperating teachers who are also graduates of the program, which also increases the chances that candidates will see the theories that they learn in STEP coursework enacted in the classroom. The "[guiding principles for selecting placements](#)" document in the STEP Handbook ([Secondary/Elementary \(all\)](#)) further describes this process.

Additional criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers are appropriate certification in their subject area (including EL authorization), a minimum of three years of public school teaching experience in their area of certification, and a strong commitment and willingness to mentor teacher candidates over the period of a semester or full academic year. All of STEP's fieldwork sites are accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and teach the state-adopted core curriculum.

Similarly, the criteria for the selection of **university supervisors** are appropriate certification in their subject area, a minimum of three years of public school teaching experience in their area of certification, and a strong commitment and willingness to support both teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers for a full academic year.

Throughout the year STEP monitors the quality of the clinical placements and makes necessary changes if the mutual needs of the cooperating teacher and the teacher candidate are not being met. At the end of the year candidates complete a confidential evaluation of the field placement. This feedback on the practices and mentoring of cooperating teachers is kept on file and used to make decisions regarding future field placements.

Standard 7.3

Field-based work and/or clinical experiences provide candidates opportunities to understand and address issues of diversity that affect school climate, teaching, and learning, and to help candidates develop research-based strategies for improving student learning.

STEP prepares and supports teacher leaders who can be successful working with diverse learners to achieve high intellectual, academic, and social standards by creating equitable

schools and classrooms (See [STEP Mission Statement](#)). To narrow the achievement gap among students from different socio-economic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, students with exceptionalities, and students of different sexual orientations, candidates learn to create equitable classrooms and to recognize the strengths, interests, and needs of all students. Beyond understanding the curricular and pedagogical challenges of teaching in diverse classrooms, candidates learn how to capitalize upon the diverse intellectual contributions, ideas, and perspectives that emerge in heterogeneous groups of students. By design, the STEP academic curriculum works in concert with the candidates' clinical experiences, so candidates are able to explore, apply, and investigate with immediacy the theories, ideas and strategies they learn in university courses. This link between scholarship and practice is foundational to the program's design and implementation, and the clinical experiences are central to its effectiveness.

Because candidates complete their clinical placements in settings where they work with diverse student populations, they have many opportunities to enact, develop, and reflect on their commitment to equity and fairness. STEP prioritizes placing candidates in schools and classrooms that reflect California's diversity. Candidates work with learners from different backgrounds during the STEP/Sunnyvale summer school program. This program includes significant numbers of English language learners. Many of students at Columbia Middle School (28.2%) are English Learners, which includes Limited English Proficient (LEP), Redesignated as Limited English Proficient (R-LEP), and Fully English Proficient (FEP) students. At the K-8 summer school, 58% of the students were English Learners. (See [Columbia Middle School's SARC Report](#) for more demographic information about the school.)

As their SARC (School Accountability Report Card) Reports show, all of STEP's placement sites for the regular academic year are also racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse and are selected in part on the basis of their diversity. Students of color comprise at least 50% of the student populations in over half of STEP's placement schools. All candidates are placed in schools with English learners and generally teach in the most racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse classrooms within their schools. In rare instances (high level chemistry or physics courses for example), when a candidate's primary assignment does not fulfill the criteria for linguistic diversity, a second clinical placement is arranged to ensure that the candidate has opportunities to support the language development of English learners under the supervision of a qualified teacher. As the [Demographics of STEP Clinical Placement Sites](#) document¹ shows, candidates have opportunities to work with P-12 students from many different backgrounds. Even in schools where the student population is less diverse overall, candidates work in de-tracked classrooms or in special programs designed to support previously underachieving students (e.g., AVID, ELD classes, etc.). In their clinical placements, candidates get to know their students through close interactions: observing, interviewing, instructing, and assessing work to understand students' lives and learning. Clinical placements enable candidates to work with expert practitioners who are knowledgeable, skillful, and committed to the academic success of all their students. Increasingly, faculty at placement schools have been working explicitly on an equity agenda through efforts to

¹ Data provided for 2014-2015 placements, as 2015-16 SARC data are not yet available.

detrack classes and maintain an academically and intellectually challenging curriculum for all students.

Moreover, as noted above, the close alignment of coursework with clinical practice ensures that candidates have opportunities to implement research-based strategies to support all learners. Candidates are supported in developing the following proficiencies, among others: designing learning segments where students can access information relevant to the task through multiple representations, via different media, and in different ways; developing assessments that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in multiple formats, orally and in writing; using different participant structures in the classroom to maximize student engagement; connecting lessons and content to student and community backgrounds, experiences, and interest; and engaging in inquiry and reflecting on their practice. For example, several courses (such as [*EDUC240: Adolescent Development and Learning*](#), [*EDUC283: Child Development in and Beyond School*](#), and [*EDUC285: Supporting Students with Special Needs \(Secondary/Elementary \(all\)\)*](#)) require candidates to compile major case studies or profiles of individual students, which must incorporate a discussion of relevant research. For example, in [*EDUC284: Teaching and Learning in Heterogeneous Classrooms*](#), candidates complete an assignment in which they develop linguistic profiles of their field placements. In doing so, they describe the linguistic backgrounds of the students in their classes and in the school in general. Candidates learn about school structures and resources available for English learners, including English Language Development (ELD) courses, mainstream, bilingual, or sheltered content area courses, as well as the presence of specialists and paraprofessionals who provide additional support to English learners. Candidates also observe and describe the language demands of their school classroom and consider under what circumstances English learners, as well as the whole class, seem to struggle with oral or written language. This attention to individual students, the class as a whole, and the broader school context prepares candidates to develop instructional practices that meet the language needs of their students. Projects such as these provide candidates with feedback on the extent to which they are able to translate theories learned in the STEP classroom to real-world instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Finally, STEP draws on [many assessments](#) to evaluate candidates' proficiencies related to diversity in each part of the teaching and learning cycle: planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection. These aspects of the teaching and learning cycle are evaluated in part on their attention to issues of equity, including: (1) To what extent do lesson plans and units provide all students with access to challenging content? (2) What do candidates' interactions with their students demonstrate about their ability to facilitate equitable participation of all students in the classroom? (3) How do candidates use formative and summative assessments to provide opportunities for all students to show what they have learned, and to what extent do candidates use this information to inform their subsequent planning? and (4) What do candidates' written reflections reveal about their inquiry into and consideration of issues of diversity and equity? In the written reflections that candidates complete as part of formal observation cycles throughout the year, they often wrestle with issues of equity—racial, linguistic, socio-economic, gender,

etc.—and their efforts to meet the needs of all students. Weekly supervisory meetings also offer candidates another opportunity to introduce and delve into any issues of equity that might be surfacing at their placement sites. Furthermore, STEP requires candidates to collect video from the field placement as they complete course assignments, supervisory observations, and the [PACT Teaching Event](#). This video footage provides additional evidence of the ways that candidates' dispositions are demonstrated in their interactions with students, as well as candidates' attempts to include all students in the classroom.