STEP Observation Cycle

The university supervisor completes three formal observations of the teacher candidate each quarter. The purpose of these observations is to build a record of the candidate’s growth as an educator, to help he/she develop a variety of ways to reflect on practice, and to connect that reflective process to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

1. **The Lesson Plan**
   The teacher candidate consults with the cooperating teacher to identify learning goals that fit well with the flow of the class and with his/her knowledge of the students. The candidate designs a lesson plan to support the students’ progress toward these goals. The candidate designs the lesson plan on his/her own, but is encouraged to solicit input from the cooperating teacher, university supervisor, course instructors, and peers. Early in the year the lesson will be fairly short (10-20 minutes), but over time the observed lessons will grow longer. Eventually the candidate will create lesson plans that span the entire class period. While there is no standard format for the lesson plan, it should include the following elements:
   - Learning goals for the students
   - A description of the lesson in enough detail that a colleague could implement the plan
   - Plan for assessing students’ progress toward the goals of the lesson

2. **The Planning Conference**
   In the planning conference the candidate confers with the university supervisor about the lesson plan. The supervisor will provide feedback to help the candidate revise the plan and prepare for the lesson. The supervisor’s expertise is especially useful in anticipating what students may find challenging, refining particular strategies that have been chosen for the lesson, and contemplating potential pitfalls in classroom management. Together, the candidate and university supervisor will also select a focus for the observation. For example, the supervisor might track students’ participation throughout the lesson or note the kinds of questions that the candidate is asking the students (see Observation Tools).

3. **The Observation**
   The supervisor observes the candidate implement the lesson he/she has designed. The supervisor will collect data to help the candidate see aspects of the lesson that are often difficult to notice as a new teacher. The supervisor will typically sit in an unobtrusive place in the room while taking notes, although he or she may occasionally circulate around the room to observe how students are engaging with the work. The supervisor may also arrive early or stay beyond the designated time of the lesson in order to understand of the broader context of the classroom.

4. **The Debrief Conference**
   During the debrief conference the candidate discusses the observed lesson with the supervisor and, when possible, the cooperating teacher. This debrief should be scheduled as soon as possible after the lesson’s completion so that the discussion is rooted in the specific details of
what happened. The debrief will help the candidate to celebrate the strengths of emerging practice, identify areas for improvement, and reflect on the experience of facilitating the lesson. The lesson will never go exactly as envisioned, but the moments that feel most uncertain or unclear often provide the richest opportunities for the candidate’s own learning.

5. The Reflection
Within 48 hours of the debrief session, the candidate submits a written reflection to the supervisor. Writing this reflection pushes the candidate to examine practice in a more sustained, deliberate way. It also demonstrates the candidate’s growing ability to reflect on your practice independently. This reflection does not merely recap what happened during the lesson or editorialize about a particular issue.

The following questions may help candidates to select a focus for the reflection:

a. Choose a moment during the lesson that surprised or challenged you. What key issue(s) arose at that moment? What have you learned by reconsidering that moment after the fact?

b. If you were to implement the lesson again, what would you do differently, and what would you repeat? Why? What did you notice that would lead you to alter your approach next time?

c. What was an important decision or adjustment that you had to make during the lesson? What influenced your decision-making in the moment? Looking back on that moment, what were the advantages and drawbacks of what you decided to do?

d. What have you learned about your students during this lesson? What have you learned about yourself? What evidence of student learning can you identify, and how does that evidence influence what you will do next?

e. Discuss a specific fear or uncertainty that emerged for you during the lesson. What prompted it? How did it influence your teaching? What can you learn from it?

f. What connections can you find between what is happening in your classroom and what you are learning in your coursework? As you consider these connections, what questions have emerged as a result of this lesson? How do you answer those questions right now?

These prompts are not intended to provide an exhaustive menu of options. As the year progresses, the candidate will discover many new questions and ideas. Over time the candidate should, in consultation with the supervisor, pursue his/her own questions in the written reflections.

The reflection should:

- Offer careful analysis of specific moment(s) that arose during the lesson
- Provide concrete details to support that analysis
- Discuss how the analysis of this lesson will influence your future practice
- Make specific reference to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession
- Be 2-3 pages in length
- Employ the polished, edited writing of a professional educator

If the supervisor does not feel that the written reflection has met the above criteria, the candidate will be asked to revise and resubmit it.