

§ 115C-269.25. Clinical partnerships and practice in educator preparation programs.

(a) Collaborative Partnerships With Elementary and Secondary Schools. – EPPs shall establish and maintain collaborative, formalized partnerships with elementary and secondary partner schools that are focused on student achievement, continuous school improvement, and the professional development of elementary and secondary educators, as well as those preparing educators.

(b) Memorandum of Understanding With Local School Administrative Units. – EPPs shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the local school administrative unit or the partner school where students are placed or employed. In the memorandum, the EPP and the local school administrative unit or partner school, as applicable, shall:

- (1) Define the collaborative relationship between the EPP and the local school administrative unit or partner school and how this partnership will be focused on continuous school improvement and student achievement.
- (2) Adopt a plan for collaborative clinical educator or mentor selection, orientation, and student placement.
- (3) Determine how information will be shared and verified between the EPP and the local school administrative unit or partner school.

(c) Field Experience Requirements. – To the extent practicable, EPPs shall require, in all programs leading to initial professional licensure, the following:

- (1) Field experiences in every semester that include organized and sequenced engagement of students in settings that provide them with opportunities to observe, practice, and demonstrate knowledge and skills. The experiences shall be systematically designed and sequenced to increase the complexity and levels of engagement with which students apply, reflect upon, and expand their knowledge and skills, and to increase in each semester prior to the student's internship the number of hours spent in field experiences.
- (2) A minimum of two hours of field experience in the first semester of the program and a cumulative total of at least 12 hours of field experiences prior to the student's internship.
- (3) At least one field experience in a low-performing school.

(d) Clinical Practice Requirements. – EPPs shall require clinical practice in the form of one of the following:

- (1) Internship that lasts for a minimum of 16 weeks. Internships may be over the course of two semesters and shall, to the extent practicable, provide field experiences at both the beginning and ending of the school year. It shall be the responsibility of a clinical educator, in cooperation with the principal and the representative of the EPP, to assign to the intern responsibilities and duties that will provide adequate preparation for teaching.
- (2) Residency that meets the following criteria:
 - a. The residency lasts for a minimum of one year.
 - b. The EPP provides ongoing support to a student for the full term of the residency.
 - c. The EPP assigns a clinical mentor to the resident.
 - d. The resident completes field experiences and training required by the State Board prior to the residency.

(e) Clinical Educator Requirements. – The EPP shall ensure clinical educators who supervise students in internships meet the following requirements:

- (1) Be professionally licensed in the field of licensure sought by the student.
- (2) Have a minimum of three years of experience in a teaching role.

(3) Have been rated, through the educator's most recent formal evaluations, at least at the "proficient" level as part of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System, or the equivalent on an evaluation system utilized by another state or partner school, as applicable, in the field of licensure sought by the student. The principal shall determine which clinical educator best meets the needs of each intern and shall assign the most appropriate clinical educator to that intern, with priority consideration for those clinical educators rated as "distinguished" and "accomplished." If a principal determines that a teacher rated as "proficient" is the most appropriate clinical educator for an intern, the principal shall maintain records of the reasons for that determination.

(f) Legal Protection of Interns. – An intern under the supervision of a clinical educator or principal shall have the protection of the laws accorded to a licensed educator.

(g) Pedagogy Assessment. – EPPs shall require, in addition to a content assessment, a nationally normed and valid pedagogy assessment to determine clinical practice performance. Passing scores and mastery criteria shall be determined by the State Board. (2017-189, ss. 2(i), 6(p).)