UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
PHYLLIS J. WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDU 395 Elementary / Early Childhood
Level 1 Clinical Experience
Teacher Candidate Packet

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Welcome Letter

Dear Teacher Candidate,

Welcome to your first field-based clinical experience in the Teacher Education Program (TEP)! EDU 395 is designed to help you connect your coursework to authentic classroom practice while beginning to explore your identity as an educator.

This course marks an exciting transition – one in which you will move from learning about teaching to participating in it. You will spend time in both a preschool classroom and a K-3 elementary classroom, working directly with students as educators. Through this experience, you will begin to:

- Understand the daily responsibilities of teaching
- Build relationships with students and colleagues
- Apply course concepts in real educational settings
- Reflect on your own professional goals and growth

Because this is your first formal placement, you'll benefit from approaching each day with curiosity, initiative, and professionalism. We encourage you to ask questions, take notes, and thoughtfully engage in classroom life. The insights you gain during this experience will lay the foundation for everything to come in your teacher preparation journey.

We are excited to support you as you take this important step. If you have any questions along the way, please contact the Office of Clinical Experiences at 406-243-5581.

Sincerely,
The Office of Clinical Experiences
Phyllis J. Washington College of Education
University of Montana

Placement Structure and Expectations

The Level 1 clinical experience is designed to introduce you to the daily responsibilities of teaching and help you build foundational skills in real classroom settings. Your experience will take place in two placements:

- 11 hours in the UM LAB preschool classroom (3 LAB sessions plus intro and exit meetings)
- 40 hours in a K-3 elementary classroom

These hours are structured into your course schedule and are typically completed in two-hour blocks.

Scheduling and Attendance

You will spend **11 hours in the UM LAB preschool** classroom. Candidates will sign up for a total of **three 3.5-hour slots** in the same classroom. The sign-up sheet will be posted on the EDU 395 Canvas course website.
You are expected to attend your K-3 placement at least twice a week – typically on **Mondays and Wednesdays for approximately two hours per visit**. We discourage Friday visits, as those days often follow altered school schedules and may not offer consistent instructional opportunities.

Once you receive confirmation of your K-3 placement from the Office of Clinical Experiences, it is your responsibility to **contact your cooperating teacher within 3 days of receiving your placement announcement**. During this initial outreach, be sure to:

- Introduce yourself and confirm your schedule

- Ask about classroom routines, student expectations, and how you can best support learning
- Clarify school arrival procedures and any materials you should review in advance

As part of your preparation, you will also complete an Initial Interview Assignment, which includes discussion topics to guide your first conversation with your cooperating teacher. This interview will help you understand classroom procedures, clarify your role, and establish clear expectations for communication and professionalism.

Timely, respectful communication helps set the tone for a successful experience. If you have any questions or need guidance, please contact the Office of Clinical Experiences.

Placement Assignments
The Office of Clinical Experiences assigns placements within a 30-mile radius of Missoula. While we try to consider transportation and placement quality, reassignment requests are considered only when a legitimate concern has been documented and cannot be resolved at the classroom level.

Candidate Responsibilities and Assignments

This clinical experience is your first opportunity to step into the role of a teacher in a classroom. While it's natural to begin with some observation, you are expected to move beyond passive observation early in your placement. You should actively engage in the life of the classroom – assisting students, supporting instruction, and contributing to a positive learning environment.

Don't wait to be told what to do – look for ways to be helpful and ask your cooperating teacher how you can get involved. Whether it's helping during transitions, sitting with students during group time, or supporting a learning center, your presence and initiative make a difference. The more you engage, the more you will learn about teaching, relationships, and classroom culture.

This experience is designed to complement your coursework in early literacy, early numeracy, classroom management, assessment, and curriculum foundations, and will help you connect theory to practice in authentic educational settings.

Your Role in the Classroom
Depending on your cooperating teacher's guidance and classroom context, your responsibilities may include:

- Assisting with classroom routines and transitions
- Working with individuals in small groups
- Supporting literacy or math centers
- Facilitating read-alouds or classroom discussions
- Observing student learning and behavior

Your professional initiative, curiosity, and engagement are essential. Don't hesitate to ask questions, help, or reflect with your teacher about how you can be the most helpful.

Required Assignments
As part of your level 1 experience, you will complete a capstone case study project that gives you the opportunity to apply your learning in a focused, student-centered way. This project will involve working closely with one student – or a small group of students – throughout your placement.

Note: Additional details about these assignments will be provided through your coursework and instructors.

Assessment and Final Documentation
Your performance during the Level 1 clinical experience will be evaluated through formal and informal feedback from your cooperating teacher and your university instructor. At the end of the placement, your cooperating teacher will complete a Final Progress Report evaluating your performance across several domains, including professionalism, communication, instructional support, and classroom engagement. A copy of this form is included in this packet for your reference.

You are responsible for:

- Meeting with your cooperating teacher to review the completed evaluation
- Ensuring your Classroom Time Log is complete, initialed, and signed at the end of the placement
- Submitting both documents into the EDU 395 Canvas course as a **Word or PDF file** (not photo uploads)

***Failure to submit required or incomplete documentation will affect your final grade. If you need assistance, contact the Office of Clinical Experiences.**

Professional Behaviors

As a Level 1 teacher candidate, you are expected to uphold high standards of professionalism throughout your clinical placement. You are joining a school community as a guest and emerging professional. Your actions, communication, and reliability all contribute to the success of your experience and the relationships you build with students and staff.

You are expected to consistently uphold the Clinical Experiences Professional Behaviors and follow the University of Montana Student Code of Conduct. Failure to meet these standards – whether in coursework, clinical placements, or interactions with students, colleagues, and the community – may result in the development of a Professional Growth Plan (PGP), removal from the placement, or other disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Key Areas of Professionalism

- **Appearance and Dress:** Dress in a way that reflects school expectations for staff. If you are unsure, ask your cooperating teacher or refer to the school's staff handbook. When in doubt, error on the side of being more formal and appropriate for a classroom setting.

- **Attendance and Punctuality:** You are expected to attend every clinical session that you plan with your cooperating teacher. Arrive on time, wear your University of Montana identification badge, sign in at the office, and be fully present and prepared to engage. If you must miss a day due to illness or emergency, contact your cooperating teacher **before your scheduled time** and notify your faculty mentor as well.

- **Preparation and Follow-Through:** Come prepared with the necessary materials and a clear understanding of what you are expected to do. If you are responsible for a task, follow through. Demonstrating dependability and initiative will help build trust in your professional relationships.

- **Communication:** Use professional language in all interactions – with students, teachers, staff, and families. Ask questions respectfully and listen attentively. When emailing or texting your cooperating teacher, use appropriate grammar, tone, and formatting.

- **School Policy and Expectations:** Follow all school and district rules. This includes expectations for use of technology (e.g., no cell phones during instructional time), confidentiality, and professional boundaries. Review any staff handbook or guidelines provided by your cooperating teacher or school administrator.

- **Engagement and relationship building:** Be present and involved during your time in the classroom. Look for appropriate ways to connect with students, show interest in their learning, and contribute positively to the classroom community.

  During Your Placement
  There may be moments during the school day when direct instructions are not immediately provided. During these times, teacher candidates are expected to remain professionally engaged by:
  - assisting students,
  - observing instruction intentionally,
  - helping with classroom routines,
  - preparing materials,
  - or asking the cooperating teacher how you can support learning.

  Avoid using phones, sitting passively, or disengaging from classroom activities during instructional time.

Reminder: These expectations are outlined in more detail in the **Teacher Education Services Professional Guidelines** Please review this document and refer to it throughout your placement.

If concerns about your professionalism arise, your cooperating teacher will begin by offering feedback and outlining specific expectations. If further support is needed, the Office of Clinical Experiences may create a professional growth plan or – in rare circumstances – remove a candidate from the placement.

Addressing Concerns

We want your clinical placement to be a meaningful and positive experience. While most placements go smoothly, it's normal to encounter occasional questions or challenges. If something arises that causes concern, you're encouraged to approach the situation with professionalism and reflection.

Start by speaking directly with your cooperating teacher. Many concerns – whether about communication, expectations, or your role – can be resolved through open, honest conversation. Taking initiative to clarify and problem-solve is part of your development as a professional.

If the concern persists or you are not comfortable addressing it on your own, contact your faculty mentor or the Office of Clinical Experiences.

Contact:
Megan Bilant
Director of Clinical Experiences and Educator Licensure
megan.bilant@mso.umt.edu
(406) 243-5581

Co-Teaching in Clinical Experiences

Co-teaching is a collaborative model in which two or more educators work together to plan, deliver, and assess instruction within a shared classroom environment. In clinical placements, co-teaching provides a supportive structure for candidates to grow professionally while contributing meaningfully to student learning.

This model is responsive to the evolving relationship between P-12 schools and teacher preparation programs and is supported by research showing that:

- P-12 student performance improves when co-teaching is used effectively
- Lower student-teacher ratios help address diverse learning needs
- Teacher candidates gain confidence and instructional skill through structured participation

You and your cooperating teacher are not expected to co-teach every lesson, but you are encouraged to explore co-teaching strategies together and decide when and how they might enhance instruction. These approaches give you opportunities to take an active role in the classroom while supporting your growth as a future educator.

Strategy	Definition/Example
One Teach, One Observe	One teacher has primary responsibility while the other gathers specific observational information on students or the (instructing) teacher. The key to this strategy is to focus the observation – where the teacher doing the observation is observing specific behaviors. **Ex:** One teacher can observe students for their understanding of directions while the other leads.
One Teach, One Assist	An extension of One Teach, One Observe. One teacher has primary instructional responsibility while the other assists students with their work, monitors behaviors, or corrects assignments. **Ex**: While one teacher has the instructional lead, the person assisting can be the "voice" for the students when they don't understand or are having difficulties.
Station Teaching	The co-teaching pair divides the instructional content into parts – Each teacher instructs one of the groups, groups then rotate or spend a designated amount of time at each station – often an independent station will be used along with the teacher led stations. **Ex:** One teacher might lead a station where the students play a money math game and the other teacher could have a mock store where the students purchase items and make change.
Parallel Teaching	Each teacher instructs half the students. The two teachers are addressing the same instructional material and presenting the material using the same teaching strategy. The greatest benefit to this approach is the reduction of student to teacher ratio. **Ex**: Both teachers are leading a question-and-answer discussion on specific current events and the impact they have on our economy.
Supplemental Teaching	This strategy allows one teacher to work with students at their expected grade level, while the other teacher works with those students who need the information and/or materials re-taught, extended or remediated. **Ex**: One teacher may work with students who need re-teaching of a concept while the other teacher may work with students who need re-teaching of a concept while the other teacher works with the rest of the students on enrichment.
Alternative (Differentiated)	Alternative teaching strategies provide two different approaches to teaching the same information. The learning outcome is the same for all students, however the avenue for getting there is different. **Ex**: One instructor may lead a group in predicting prior to reading by looking at the cover of the book and the illustrations, etc. The other instructor accomplishes the same outcome but with his/her group, the students predict by connecting the items pulled out of the bag with the story.
Team Teaching	Well-planned, team-taught lessons, exhibit an invisible flow of instruction with no prescribed division of authority. Using a team-teaching strategy, both teachers are actively involved in the lesson. From a students' perspective, there is no clearly defined leader – as both teachers share the instruction, are free to interject information, and available to assist students and answer questions. **Ex:** Both instructors can share the reading of a story or text so that the students hear two voices.

The strategies are not hierarchical – they can be used in any order and/or combined to best meet the needs of the K-12 students in the classroom.

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Candidate Personal Contact Information

Teacher candidate, please complete and return to the building administrative assistant or building administrator.

Teacher candidate: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

In case of an emergency, contact: _____ Phone: _____

Relationship to you: _____

Placement Information

Teacher(s)/Content area: _____

To the building administrator:
This individual is a University of Montana teacher candidate from the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education. If there are any problems or concerns, please contact the Director of Clinical Experiences:

Megan Bilant
Phone: 406-243-5581
Email: megan.bilant@mso.umt.edu

Clinical Experience Schedule

Teacher Candidate, this form is for your planning purposes. Please work with your cooperating teacher to develop a specific schedule. This form is not submitted to UM.

Place an "X" in the box for those times you are scheduled in this school and maintain your schedule.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:30-8:00					
8:00-8:30					
8:30-9:00					
9:00-9:30					
9:30-10:00					
10:00-10:30					
10:30-11:00					
11:00-11:30					
11:30-Noon					
Noon-12:30					
12:30-1:00					
1:00-1:30					
1:30-2:00					
2:00-2:30					
2:30-3:00					
3:00-3:30					
3:30-4:00					

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LAB School or Preschool Time Log

Teacher candidate, use this form to document your time in LAB/Preschool throughout the experience. Be sure to get your teacher's initials daily, total your hours, and upload to Canvas.

Teacher candidate: _____ 790# _____

Complete this log to record the date and a brief description of each classroom experience. The table below gives an example. Round time to the nearest 15 minutes. If you need more space, make a copy of this log. *Please total your hours at the end of your experience.*

Date	Time In & Time Out	Hours/ Minutes	Brief Description of Clinical Experience	Teacher's initials verifying time and experiences
9/9/25	9:00 – 10:30	1.5 hours	Assisted with math centers	***SA***

Clinical Experience Log

Date	Time In & Time Out	Hours/ Minutes	Brief Description of Clinical Experience	Teacher's initials verifying time and experiences
Total Time:				

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K-3 Classroom Time Log

Teacher candidate, use this form to document your time in your assigned K-3 classroom throughout the experience. Be sure to get your teacher's initials daily, total your hours, and upload to Canvas.

Teacher candidate: _____ 790# _____

Cooperating Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____

Complete this log to record the date and a brief description of each classroom experience. The table below gives an example. Round time to the nearest 15 minutes. If you need more space, make a copy of this log. *Please total your hours at the end of your experience.*

Date	Time In & Time Out	Hours/ Minutes	Brief Description of Clinical Experience	Teacher's initials verifying time and experiences
9/9/25	9:00 – 10:30	1.5 hours	Assisted with math centers	***SA***

Clinical Experience Log

Date	Time In & Time Out	Hours/ Minutes	Brief Description of Clinical Experience	Teacher's initials verifying time and experiences

Date	Time In & Time Out	Hours/ Minutes	Brief Description of Clinical Experience	Teacher's initials verifying time and experiences
Total Time:				

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Final Progress Report

Teacher Candidate	UM ID#	Semester
School/District	Subject(s)/Grade Level(s)	
Cooperating Teacher	Email	

Cooperating teachers are to assess the candidate using the rubric below as a reference. **The components included represent the elements cooperating teachers should have had the opportunity to observe and assess for this Level 1 experience.** Written feedback regarding the candidate's progress can also be provided.

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation			
NA	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**
	1	**2**	**3**
Not Applicable or Not Observed	Teacher candidate's plans reflect little understanding of the content, the students, and available resources. Instructional outcomes are either lacking or inappropriate; assessment methodologies are inadequate.	Teacher candidate's plans reflect moderate understanding of the content, the students, and available resources. Some instructional outcomes are suitable to the students as a group, and the approaches to assessment are partially aligned to the goals.	Teacher candidate's plans reflect solid understanding of the content, the students, and available resources. Instructional outcomes represent important learning suitable to most students. Most elements of the instructional design, including the assessments, are aligned to the goals.
Domain 2: The Classroom Environment			
NA	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**
	1	**2**	**3**
Not Applicable or Not Observed	Classroom environment is characterized by chaos and conflict, with low expectations for learning, no clear standards of student conduct, poor use of physical space, and negative interactions between individuals.	Classroom environment functions somewhat effectively, with modest expectations for student learning and conduct, and classroom routines and use of space that partially support student learning. Students and the teacher rarely treat one another with disrespect.	Classroom environment functions smoothly, with little or no loss of instructional time. Expectations for student learning are high, and interactions among individuals are respectful. Standards for student conduct are clear, and the physical environment supports learning.
Domain 3: Instruction			
NA	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**
	1	**2**	**3**
Not Applicable or Not Observed	Instruction is characterized by poor communication, low-level questions, little student engagement or participation, little or no use of assessment in learning, and rigid adherence to an instructional plan despite evidence that it should be revised or modified.	Only some students are engaged in learning because of only partially clear communication, uneven use of discussion strategies, and only some suitable instructional activities and materials. The teacher candidate displays some use of assessment in instruction and is moderately flexible in adjusting the instructional plan in response to students' interests and their success in learning.	All students are engaged in learning as a result of clear communication and successful use of questioning and discussion techniques. Activities and assignments are of high quality, and teacher candidate and students make productive use of assessment. The candidate demonstrates flexibility in contributing to the success of the lesson and of each student.
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities			
NA	**Unsatisfactory**	**Basic**	**Proficient**
	1	**2**	**3**
Not Applicable or Not Observed	The teacher candidate demonstrates low ethical standards and levels of professionalism, with poor recordkeeping systems and skills in reflection, little or no communication with families or colleagues, and avoidance of school and district responsibilities and participation in activities for professional growth.	The teacher candidate demonstrates moderate ethical standards and levels of professionalism, with rudimentary record-keeping systems and skills in reflection, modest communication with families or colleagues, and compliance with expectations regarding participation in school and district	The teacher candidate demonstrates high ethical standards and a genuine sense of professionalism by engaging in accurate reflection on instruction, maintaining accurate records, communicating frequently with families, actively participating in school and district events, and engaging in activities for professional development.

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation				
Directions: Please place a check in the column that indicates your assessment of the candidate's performance level.				
Components: (1d and 1e are not assessed)	**N/A**	**1**	**2**	**3**
1a. Demonstrates knowledge of content and pedagogy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1b. Demonstrates knowledge of students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1c. Sets instructional outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1f. Assesses student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 2: The Classroom Environment				
Components: (2c and 2e are not assessed)	**N/A**	**1**	**2**	**3**
2a. Creates an environment of respect and rapport.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2b. Establishes a culture for learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2d. Manages student behavior.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 3: Instruction				
Components: (all components are assessed)	**N/A**	**1**	**2**	**3**
3a. Communicates with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3b. Uses questioning and discussion techniques.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3c. Engages students in learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3d. Uses assessments in instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3e. Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities				
Components: (4b, 4c, and 4d are not assessed)	**N/A**	**1**	**2**	**3**
4a. Reflects on teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4e. Grows and develops professionally.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4f. Displays professionalism.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Areas of Strength:				
Recommended Areas of Growth:				

☐ This teacher candidate successfully completed this Level 1 clinical experience. I recommend that they continue with upper-division courses and related clinical experiences.

☐ This teacher candidate would benefit from additional experience before continuing with upper-division courses and related clinical experiences. Refer to the recommendations above.

Cooperating Teacher Signature _____ Date _____

Teacher Candidate Signature _____ Date_____