

Important Internship Placement Info For Special Education Dual-Endorsing Students Who Are District Employees

Prior to beginning SPU's program, paraeducators should confirm that their building administration and mentor(s) are supportive of the increased responsibility they will need to assume during internship. Mentors will stay actively engaged with our co-teaching model; however, it is sometimes difficult for candidates to be seen as a full *teacher* when they have been working within the classroom in a paraeducator role. An open discussion about this before any final arrangements are made is highly encouraged. Additionally, candidates must inquire with their administration about district policy, as some districts require a short leave of absence during independent student teaching.

If a candidate has been working as a paraeducator in one classroom when admitted into the program but may be assigned to another classroom in the building or district once a new school year begins, they should keep in close communication with SPU's placement coordinator during the placement process.

When dual endorsing, many candidates and mentor teachers have questions about how much time should be spent in each setting, as well as distinctive features between the two. Here are some key points to consider when working out a schedule:

- Most importantly, each student teaching experience should provide an authentic and well-supported learning opportunity for the candidate. We offer guidelines that are flexible so that candidates and mentors can design the best schedule for their team within the parameters of state and program internship requirements.
- Candidates should consider special education to be their "primary" endorsement area. They will spend most of their internship hours in a special education context.
- Candidates should view their general education student teaching internship as a "mini-internship" that follows the gradual release of responsibility concept and the co-teaching model. They should have the opportunity to observe, work with small groups, and scale up to taking the lead in whole-class planning, instruction, and assessment in both SpEd and GenEd.
- In their general education placement, candidates should plan to teach at least one "unit of study," which means that they will plan, instruct, and assess in a sequenced learning segment of 5-10+ lessons.
- After a general education mentor teacher is assigned (this often occurs after the SpEd portion of the internship has already begun), the candidate should email SPU's placement coordinator to provide their updated schedule and the mentor teacher's contact information.

- Note that while most SpEd-endorsing students will be assigned to both a special education classroom and a separate general education classroom (and will thus have two separate mentor teachers), candidates may be able to complete their general education internship requirements in their special education setting if the class size is large enough (12+) and the students are working at or near grade level. ***However, this plan must be approved by the SPU placement coordinator to ensure state and program requirements are met.***
- Candidates will be observed at least once in their general education placement, and their supervisor will collect evidence to add to the IPC and disposition assessments completed at the mid- and end-points of internship.
- While we discourage the practice of counting the hours of student teaching simply to meet a minimum requirement, we understand that general guidelines are helpful. *Although candidates are encouraged to complete these hours consecutively, they can be spread throughout the internship or condensed into a certain number of weeks at the beginning, middle, or end of internship—whichever is the best fit.*
 1. **AMAT** candidates need to have a **minimum of 90 hours** of student teaching experience in their general education setting.
 2. **MAT** and **UG** candidates must have a minimum of **60 hours of student teaching** experience in their general education setting.
 3. Regardless of actual time spent, The Professional Educators Standards Board allows for **only 7.5 hours per day** (the teacher’s contracted day) to count toward supervised student teaching experience (i.e., ten weeks of full-time teaching equals 75 hours of field experience).
 4. For an internship schedule to count as “full-time,” it must have a **minimum of four periods per day**.
- **Independent student teaching** can be defined as the period of time where the candidate takes the lead in terms of planning, instruction and assessment, though the mentor is still actively engaged. It can be flexible based on the needs of the students, calendar and curricular considerations. It can be flexible based on the needs of the students, calendar and curricular considerations. **AMAT** candidates typically teach in their Special Education setting for 10-12+ weeks, **UG** candidates teach 6-8+ weeks and **MAT** candidates teach 4-6+ weeks. Though it is encouraged, these weeks do not need to be consecutive. NOTE: If a district requires candidates to take a leave of absence, a 6-week leave is sufficient for any program.
- When candidates have determined the best schedule for their dual endorsements, they should **provide all information about the time they will spend in each subject area** to SPU’s Placement Coordinator by email.

Whatever their assignment may be as a paraeducator, it will be important for candidates to begin thinking more broadly outside of that role, and to confer with their mentor about how to observe and practice the more whole-group tasks of a teacher.

The co-teaching model will be a great resource. Field supervisors will provide candidates with tools and strategies for how you can work with their mentors to meet the needs of their students, job, and internship requirements.

When candidates have determined the best schedule for their internship, they should provide all information to SPU's Placement Coordinator by email.