

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND P16 INTEGRATION

It starts
HERE.

FIELD EXPERIENCE HANDBOOK

2024-2025

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Message from the Dean

Dear Teacher Candidates,

Completing field based experiences is an essential component of your teacher preparation. You will have an opportunity to connect theory and practice by spending time in real classrooms. Field based experiences are not just observations. They are opportunities to actively participate in planning and delivering instruction as well as supporting student learning.

We are grateful to have the partnership of school districts from across the Rio Grande Valley to provide you with quality placements and experienced teachers to learn from. Take advantage of this opportunity to grow in your journey to becoming an effective teacher.

Enjoy your time in schools and make the most of your experience!

Sincerely,





CEP Vision and Field Experience Overview

The vision of the College of Education and P-16 Integration is to be the catalyst for educational success for individuals, families, communities, the region, and our society at large through thoughtful, culturally sustaining partnerships with our schools and communities, demonstrating responsiveness to a growing bilingual and biliterate population.

In line with its vision, the College of Education and P-16 Integration aspires to provide a rigorous, high quality, research-supported, mutually beneficial structured field program for teacher candidates in partnership with the school district and assigned campus. A vital part of this initiative is the selection of a group of committed, experienced, and effective teachers to mentor teacher candidates throughout the duration of the structured early field program. An informal conceptual metaphor through which to consider the mentor teacher and teacher candidate relationship are that of apprenticeship.

Field Experience Purpose



The field experience component provides teacher candidates with the opportunity to experience what real-life classrooms are like. Through partnerships with local school districts, teachers, administrators, preservice teachers, and university faculty, work together to build a learning community. This structured field program is designed to give the teacher candidate an overview of the teaching profession, as well as opportunities for the application and evaluation of related theories and concepts which are taught in the program. Teacher candidates are given the opportunity to observe effective teaching strategies and how effective teachers work in their classrooms. The experience is designed to introduce prospective teachers to a variety of educational experiences in a variety of appropriate settings including teaching exceptional and diverse populations.

Additionally, the structured field program for teacher candidates in partnership with the school district and assigned campus aligns with [the *Fitness to Teach Policy*](#) of the College of Education and P-16 Integration. Here, the teacher candidate is expected to abide by and fulfill each of the *Fitness to Teach* criteria centered on requirements pertaining to academic; personal and professional; cultural and social attitudes and behavior; physical skills, and emotional dispositions.

Per Texas Administrative Code (TAC rule 228.35), for initial certification, teacher candidates are required to complete field experiences in school prior to clinical teaching.

Students must be formally admitted into the teacher education program prior to field course enrollment.

- For teacher candidates who are educational aids, field-based hours may be satisfied at their assigned campus as long as the hours are NOT completed while performing the job of an aide and the instructional or educational activities include:
 - authentic school setting in a public or private school accredited or approved by the TEA;
 - instruction by content certified teachers;
 - actual students in classrooms/instructional settings;
 - content or grade-level specific classrooms/instructional settings.

Structure of Placements for Field Experience



Since our students have different school schedules and our partner districts have different needs, we offer our candidates two options for early field:

- **Structured Early Field** for students who attend morning classes: These students are required to attend every Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday (elementary program) and Thursday (secondary/all levels program), during class time, for a period of 4-6 hours, depending on course field hours requirements. Course instructors accompany teacher candidates to the field placement. UTeach arrangements of field is created by the program.
- **Semi-Structured Early Field** for students who attend afternoon classes: These students will go once a week for 4 to 6 hours until completing the required number of field hours required by the course. Teacher candidates select the day of the week that accommodates to their schedule. Course instructor is not required to attend with students. Teacher candidates in this course will be completing their hours at different campuses and districts.

Note: Field experiences are a program requirement which means they must be completed before moving to the next course sequence.

Field experiences in teacher education programs enrich the academic coursework by providing teacher candidates opportunities to interact with teacher and students in academic settings. These experiences are an important part of the teacher candidate's preparation in becoming a professional certified teacher in the State of Texas ([TAC §228.35\(b\)\(1\) and §228.35\(e\)\(1\)](#)).

Every program define number of field hours per semester and the purpose and scope of the field work. Field-Based courses will delineate specific field assignments. Some of these field assignments may be considered part of the program key assessments.

EC-6 Elementary Program: ESL, Bilingual, and SPED

Expectations	1 st Semester In CEP	2 nd Semester In CEP	3 rd Semester In CEP	Clinical Teaching
Field Experience Hours/Days		24 hours <i>Starting week 6</i> **Structure field- Tuesday or Thursdays **Semi structure- days vary based on student's and school schedule	33 hours <i>Starting week 5 or 6</i> **Structure field- Wednesday **Semi structure- days vary based on student's and school schedule	Every weekday for 15 weeks (follow school bell)
Field-Based Course		EDSL 3310	EDCI 3336	EDCI 4637
Key or Course Assessment		Promoting English Oral Language Proficiency for English Learners Performance Assessment	Data Literacy & Reflection	TWS

EC-3 and EC- 6: Early Childhood Program

Expectations	1 st Semester In CEP	2 nd Semester In CEP	3 rd Semester In CEP	Clinical Teaching
Field Experience Hour s/Days	Pre-Teaching Experience ½ day from 8:00am to 12:00pm for six weeks **Thursdays	Developing Teaching Experience ½ day from 8:00am to 12:00pm for six weeks **Thursdays	Applied Teaching Experience 1 extended day from 8:00am to 1:00pm for six weeks **Thursdays	Every weekday for 15 weeks (follow school bell)
Field-Based Course	ECED 4391 and ECED 4392	ECED 4394 and ECED 4315	ECED 4314 and ECED 4395	EDCI 4637
Key or Course Assessment	ECED 4391- Defining and Supporting the Young Child SPED 4310- Developing an Individualized Education Plan for Children	EDSL 3310- Promoting English Oral Language Proficiency for English Learners Performance Assessment EDCI 3334- Math Lesson	ECED 4314- Play and Literacy in the Community ECED 4395- STEAM Day in the Community READ- Individual Reading Inventory Teaching English Language Arts and Reading to Elementary Students	TWS

Secondary and All Levels Programs

Expectations			Clinical Teaching
Field Experience Hours/ Days	22 hours **Structure field- Thursday **Semi structure- days vary based on student's and school schedule	33 hours **Structure field- Thursday **Semi structure- days vary based on student's and school schedule	Every weekday for 15 weeks (follow school bell)
Field-Based Course	EDUC 3302	EDUC 3304	EDUC 4611
Key or Course Assessment	Theory-Based Classroom Management Plan	Community Case Study Data Literacy & Reflection	TWS

UTeach Program

Expectations	Classroom Interactions (UTCH 3302)	Project Based Instruction (UTCH 3303)
Field Experience Hours/Days	25 total hours: 15 in-person and 10 virtual hours	25 total hours: 15 in-person and 10 virtual hours
Key Assessment	Diversity Case Study Mini Unit Lesson	Data Literacy & Reflection

Field Experience Placements

Selection of school sites:

Schools are selected using a rotation of accredited partner districts that have educational agreements with UTRGV and have hosted our teacher candidates.

Procedures for Structured Field Placements

1. The Office of Field Experiences will use the official enrollment of the field-based course to identify students that will be completing structured field for the semester. **Students will be emailed with information regarding specific district procedures for completing and clearing a criminal background check** (some districts might require a copy of a current TB test). Students are also required to have a current Texas driver's license or identification card when visiting schools.
2. The Office of Field Experiences will inform students of the scheduled time frame. Under no circumstances should the student begin completing field experiences before or after this scheduled timeframe. Absences from field experiences should be discussed with professor and arrangements to make up days need to be made with the mentor teacher and the school. Compliance with all district policies and Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators (RULE §247.2) are required when visiting schools.
3. Field assignments and activities will be defined in respective course syllabi. Teacher candidates will be required to log and describe all field hours in TK-20 Field Experience Log. This logs will be submitted to the course instructor for approval. A deadline for submitting and getting TK-20 logs approved will be provided. (See Appendix for instruction on how to log field hours in TK-20)

These field experiences requirements are mandated by the State. Refer to [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) RULE §228.35](#).

Field Experience Placements

Procedures for Semi- Structured Field Placements

1. The Office of Field Experiences will use the official enrollment of the field-based course to identify students that will be completing semi-structured field for the semester. Students will be emailed with information regarding how to complete a Qualtrics Survey in order to select district, campus, and day that is most appropriate to their schedule for completing the required hours.
2. After the survey is completed, **teacher candidates will receive information regarding specific district procedures for completing and clearing a criminal background check** (some districts might require a copy of a current TB test). Students are also required to have a current Texas driver's license or identification card when visiting schools.
3. The Office of Field Experiences will inform students of the scheduled time frame. Under no circumstances should the student begin completing field experiences before or after this scheduled timeframe. Absences from field experiences should be discussed with professor and arrangements to make up days need to be made with the mentor teacher and the school. Compliance with all district policies and Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators (RULE §247.2) are required when visiting schools.
4. Field assignments and activities will be defined in respective course syllabi. Teacher candidates will be required to log and describe all field hours in TK-20 Field Experience Log. These logs will be submitted to the course instructor for approval. A deadline for submitting and getting TK-20 logs approved will be provided. (See Appendix for instruction on how to log field hours in TK-20)

These field experiences requirements are mandated by the State. Refer to [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) RULE §228.35](#).

Teacher Candidates Roles and Responsibilities

To have a successful experience, the teacher candidate as a representative of the university, must maintain a positive professional working relationship with students, the university instructor, mentor teacher, campus administrators, colleagues, other school personnel and the community. The following responsibilities and actions are essential:

- Observe and assist mentor teacher with preparation and instruction.
- Participate in student-teacher interactions per mentor teacher direction.
- With the guidance of the mentor teacher, actively participate in small group and whole group instruction.
- Complete required field-assignments under mentor teacher guidance.
- Establish a respectful, supportive relationship with students, teachers, administrators, staff, and parents.
- Provide instructional plans and reflections as required by the course instructor and mentor teacher.
- Be punctual; do not leave early unless prior arrangements with the mentor teacher and the course instructor.
- Adhere to all district and campus policies.
- Wear appropriate professional attire.
- Follow the [Code of Ethics for TX Educators](#).
- Practice resilience and flexibility.

Mentor Teacher Roles and Responsibilities

As a professional teacher, the mentor teacher plays a vital role in the preparation of the teacher candidate by providing the best educational experience. The following may assist in creating a successful learning experience for the teacher candidate.

- Meet with the UTRGV instructor to discuss the field-based experience.
- Demonstrate commitment towards teacher candidate development and growth.
- Prepare the class for the arrival of teacher candidate, and introduces teacher candidate to students, faculty, and school personnel, as well as school facilities, resources, and services.
- Inform teacher candidate of school/district-level policies, classroom rules and routines.
- Acquaint teacher candidate with an overview of the content-area curriculum, textbooks, resources, and testing requirements.
- Brief teacher candidate regarding student emotional and learning needs, as well as classroom, school, and community factors relevant to learning.
- Model and coach teacher candidates in planning, instruction, and assessment.
- Model and coach teacher candidate for classroom environment.
- Allow teacher candidate opportunities to manage class and interact with or tutor students.
- Provide continuous feedback to teacher candidate regarding professional dispositions, interaction with students, and instruction.

University Course Instructor Roles and Responsibilities

The university course instructor acts as a liaison between the participating schools and UTRGV College of Education and P-16 Integration. The main function of the university instructor is to provide guidance and support of the teacher candidate and mentor teacher.

- *For structured field instructors-* positively represent UTRGV College of Education.
- *For structured field instructors-* conduct orientation sessions with mentor teachers and administrators to discuss:
 - Course assignments aligned to field-based experience,
 - Placement of teacher candidates in the field experience classrooms,
 - Performance outcomes with due dates,
 - List of acceptable activities for students during field experiences,
 - Weekly field schedule and provide contact information,
 - Attendance policy.
- Evaluate teacher candidate performance
 - observe and evaluate teacher candidate's performance and interactions with Pk-12 students (if applicable)
 - verify teacher candidate's attendance and approve TK-20 logs,
 - collect and evaluate field experience documentation,
 - establish open communication with campus administrators and mentor teachers to address concerns,
 - collaborate with mentor teachers to determine appropriate learning activities/teaching responsibilities for teacher candidates.

Intersection of Course Work and Field Experience

Field experiences are designed to give teacher candidates an introduction and overview of the teaching profession. Specifically, it is used as a vehicle to provide teacher candidates an effective means of learning how certain teaching methods are employed in schools; how students respond to the classroom environment; and roles of the teacher, administrators, and other school personnel.

Key Assessment Assignments:

In particular, the mentor teacher will provide valuable contextual, instructional, and assessment information and guidance to the teacher candidate. This information and guidance will be indispensable towards the teacher candidate completing the mandatory Key Assessments and assignments required by the program.

Professional Dispositions:

[Professional dispositions](#) for educators include the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Examples of professional teacher dispositions include confidentiality, honesty, professional appearance, punctuality, rapport, resilience, respect, responsibility, self-efficacy, and self-reflexivity. These dispositions are critical components, and the impact on student achievement is exponential. Also included in professional dispositions are collaboration and leadership skills.

Clinical Teaching

Clinical teaching is defined as a full day, full time, school-based practicum that is supervised by both a mentor teacher, an experienced certified teacher, and a university supervisor. Clinical teaching is an integral part of our teacher education program; it is a major requirement for initial teaching certification in the state of Texas. The clinical teaching assignment is the final demonstration by teacher candidates of their ability to perform successfully as beginning teachers. It is the time teacher candidates apply what they have learned in their teacher preparation courses to actual classrooms.

Clinical Teaching Pathways

We offer two paths for completing clinical teaching: the Traditional Clinical Teaching semester and the Yearlong Clinical Teaching Residency.

- The **Traditional Clinical Teaching** semester is a full-time commitment. It is 15 weeks, full-day, full-time, school-based assignment. The clinical teacher must follow the school schedule of his or her cooperating teacher; therefore, any other missing course work within the teacher candidate's degree plan (i.e. not professional or educational coursework) must be taken after 4:30 pm or online asynchronous. Professional and educational coursework is required to be complete prior to clinical teaching.
- The **Yearlong Clinical Teaching Residency** is a dynamic rigorous paid year-long teacher residency program, if district funds are available, that provides teacher candidates the opportunity to co-teach alongside a master teacher in a P-6 classroom while completing teaching methods courses. Under the mentorship of master teachers and university faculty, teacher residents engage in deep clinical training which allows for multiple guided opportunities to practice their teaching skills while receiving financial compensation, in most cases. Teacher residents must be admitted into the clinical teaching pathway.

Admission

Admission to the **Traditional and Yearlong Clinical Teaching** pathway must be requested by formal application in TK-20.

Clinical Teaching

Requirements for Traditional Clinical Teaching:

- **GPA:** Minimum of 2.5 overall GPA and in each area of degree plan
- **Field Experiences:** Complete all field hours required by program
- **Degree Plan Completion:** Within 12 hours of completing degree plan- graduations (these 12 hours include 6 hours of clinical teaching) and complete all education courses.
- **Other requirements:** Passing TExES score by due date and any other specific program requirements.

Application for Traditional Clinical Teaching:

Complete formal application in TK-20 one semester before student teaching.

Pursuant to the Texas Education Code 22.0835, candidates must undergo a criminal history background check prior to clinical teaching.

FALL APPLICATION	SPRING APPLICATION
Opens: 1 st Friday of April Closes: 1 st Friday of May TExES Passing Score Due: 1 st Friday of July	Opens: 1 st Friday of September Closes: 1 st Friday of October TExES Passing Score Due: 3 rd Friday of November

Requirements for Yearlong Clinical Teaching:

- **GPA:** Minimum of 2.5 overall GPA and in each area of degree plan
- **Field Experiences:** Complete at least 50 hours of field experience
- **Degree Plan Completion:** Within 21 hours of completing degree plan- graduations (these 21 hours include 6 hours of clinical teaching).
- **Other requirements:** Take required TExES exam by due date

Application for Yearlong Clinical Teaching:

Complete formal application in TK-20 during the second semester of the teacher education program. Districts will conduct interviews with the selected candidates.

Pursuant to the Texas Education Code 22.0835, candidates must undergo a criminal history background check prior to clinical teaching.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can I expect from field experiences?

From your first field experiences, it is recommended that you interact with teachers and students. You may work with small groups, tutor individual tutors or co-teach with the mentor teachers.

What is appropriate dress for field experiences?

Dress professionally but comfortably. Remember that you will be active in working with children and need to be comfortable, but also you are to represent yourself professionally.

How are mentor teachers/cooperating teachers selected for field experiences?

Campus administrators select mentor teachers based on area and level of certification.

What if I am placed at the same grade level each semester? May I request a change?

Yes, if you have the same grade level in two semesters, you may ask to switch with another student. Please ask your course instructor to assist you with this. It's to your benefit to gain experience in different grade levels.

What if I'm absent from field experiences?

First notify your course instructor of your absence and make arrangements with the mentor teacher and the school.

What if I work as a paraprofessional/teacher aide? Do I still have to complete field hours?

Yes, although you may use your own classroom for some activities, you will be required to visit other mentor teachers (this may be arranged during conference period or lunch period but must be approved by your campus administrator since you are an employee of that district).

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I complete my field-based experiences on my own?

No, students must complete field-based experiences with field-based experience coursework and must be officially admitted into the teacher education program.

Can I register for a field course even if I am not admitted into the teacher education program?

No, students must be formally admitted through the Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability.

What if my instructor or the office has not emailed me on my next steps for field -based experiences?

This is uncommon because we gather enrollment data from Assist, but should this happen to you, please email us right away at ofe@utrgv.edu.

What if I submitted my criminal background check as instructed by the office of field experience and the district's human resource department, but have not heard back from anyone?

First, check your email and missed calls to ensure you did not miss any important information or instructions. Check with your instructor to see if they have any updated information. If you did not find information on your next steps or an email confirmation for clearance, please contact our office at ofe@utrgv.edu.

When can I start my hours?

The Office of Field Based Experiences works with your instructors to provide dates and deadlines for field-based experiences. Please continue to monitor your UTRGV email.

FIELD EXPERIENCE

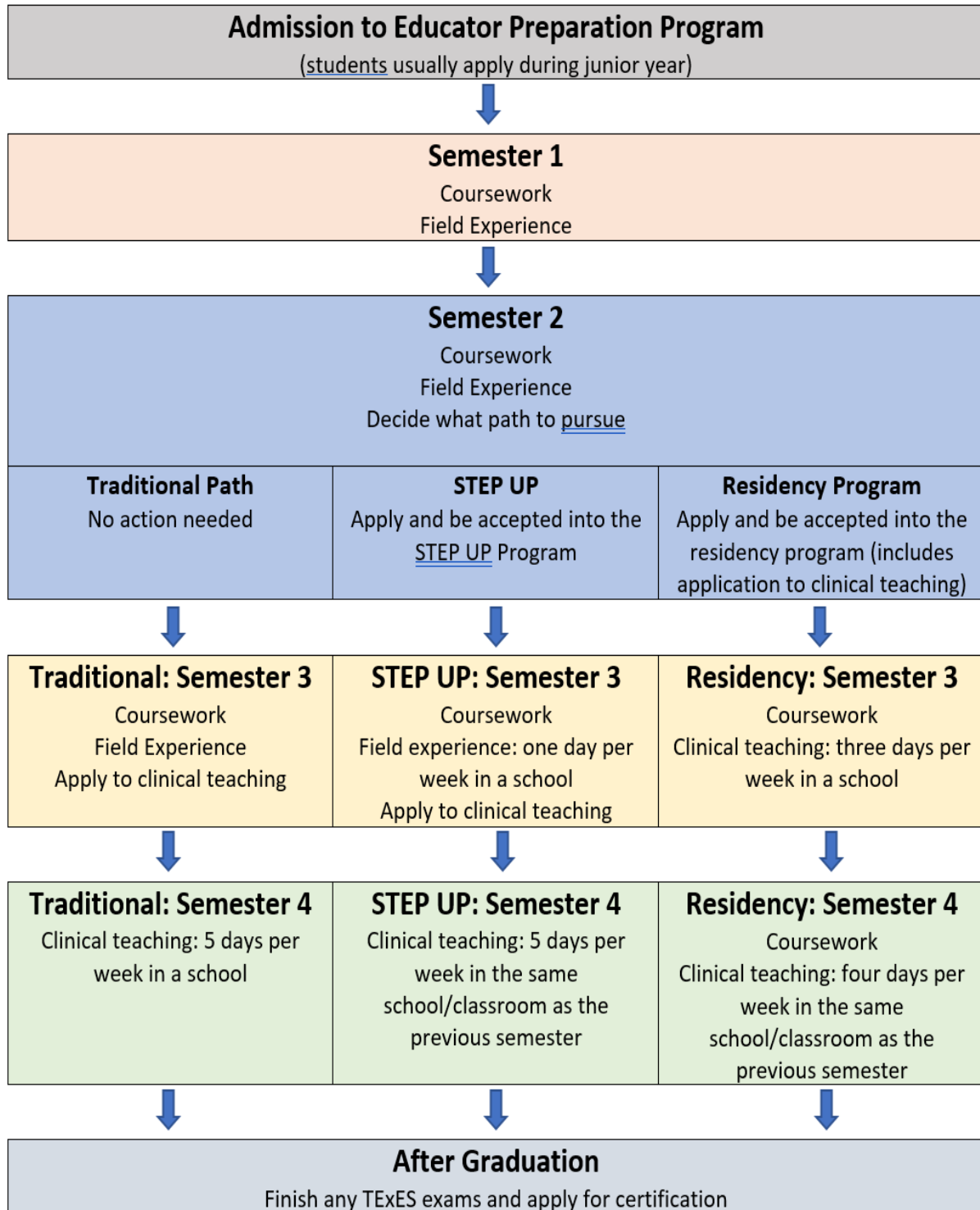
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APPENDIX

Terms and Definitions

Pre-service teacher, teacher candidate or Clinical Teacher	UTRGV student enrolled in teacher education program leading to teaching certification.
Mentor Teacher	Cooperative teacher; certified classroom teacher hosting UTRGV student.
Early Field Experiences	State-required on-going field experiences in public school setting completed during coursework in Teacher Education Program prior to Clinical Teaching
Clinical Teaching	Clinical teaching is a full-day, full-time, school-based six-semester hour practicum supervised by an experienced certified teacher and a university supervisor.
Field Assignments	Field assignments may take form of program benchmarks. Re- quired through program courses (defined in respective course syllabi) and to be completed in respective campuses.
TExES Representative Exam	A required practice TExES test taken during program.
TExES Exams	Required exams for becoming certified teacher in Texas.
TK-20 Field Hours Log	A management system that is used to documents field hours/dates/times. Your university instructor will approve your field hours in TK-20.
Campus Administrator Letter	A official letter provided by OFE to be presented to campus administrator if seeking field experience placement while employed as an educational aid or long-term substitute.
Field-Based Courses to Facilitate Field Experiences	Courses to facilitate field experiences placements, OFE will contact students through these courses (i.e. email or class presentations).
Course Instructor	University instructor or professor teaching courses identified as field-based courses.

Educator Preparation Program Pathway Options For EC-3 and EC-6



Introduction Letter to Mentor Teacher

Dear Mentor Teacher,

I would like to thank you for allowing me to complete my early field experience in your classroom. As a teacher candidate, I know I will benefit tremendously from gaining first-hand experience in your classroom and working directly with you and your students. My early field experience assignment requires that I visit your classroom **(write what days and how often you will be visiting the school)**. I am also required to complete a course assignment while in your classroom. Attached you will find the instructions to the required assignment. **(Make sure to attach the instructions to the course field assignment you are to complete)**

I will like to tell you a little bit about me **(describe any personal qualities you they will find useful; any teaching experience and what you hope to learn)**.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your contact information

