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UNIVERSITY OF  
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# THE IMPACT OF INCREASED HOURS AND SUPERVISION IN FIELD EXPERIENCE PRACTICUMS

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***Abstract:** In recent years much has been written regarding the preparation and effects of the field experience involvement for pre-service teachers. In 2013 the Teacher Education Department (TED) faculty and Office of Field Placements at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) began an in depth review and examination of our pre-service teachers' engagement during their field practicums in urban and suburban schools throughout the Omaha Metro area. The roundtable presentation will discuss the revisions that the TED has undergone in the last three years to improve courses that have a field practicum component, as well as the benefits and challenges of the increased hours in the field.*

In recent years much has been written regarding the preparation and effects of field experience practicums required of pre-service teacher candidates (Arrastia, Rawls, Brinkerhoff & Roehrig, 2014; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The College of Education's philosophy and purpose are grounded in the central principles identified by the faculty for preparing graduates who are dedicated practitioners, reflective scholars, and responsible citizens. Each of these central principles focuses on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with each principle. The College of Education at UNO celebrates and embraces its unique metropolitan mission to prepare dedicated professionals committed to excellence in education and human development. Our candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of leaders ready to fulfill critical roles in shaping the future of their communities. The College of Education provides resources and opportunities for the growth and development of dedicated practitioners, reflective scholars, and responsible citizens through a wide variety of academic programs and student support services.

## History of Field Experience Practicums in the College of Education

During 2012-2013 there was an increased number of clinical practice (student teaching) teachers who required intervention during their final practicum experience. Despite rigorous and intensive intervention, 11% of the clinical practice teachers failed the experience during the fall of 2012, 10% during the spring of 2013, and 14% in the fall of 2013. The clinical practice program was reviewed and a plan of action was set into motion. Prior to 2013 faculty teaching courses in the College of Education had the autonomy to plan, coordinate and place pre-service teacher candidates in field experience practicums in school districts throughout the Omaha Metropolitan area. Each course in the program that had a required practicum was reviewed. Faculty were asked if they were willing to block their courses and make changes in course practicum requirements. All faculty with a practicum were willing to make course delivery changes. Beginning the fall 2013 semester, faculty worked collaboratively with the Field Experience Office and local school districts to place candidates in experiences in blocked supervised practicum experiences to cumulatively build their knowledge, skills and dispositions.

## Building the BRIDGES Program

Many stakeholders (department chairs, faculty, staff, field experience personnel) were brought together to analyze the teacher education program and practicum experiences. *The Building Relevant Integrated Developmentally Guided Experiences for Students* (BRIDGES) model was developed in 2013 in an effort to improve the quality of our program (see Table 1). The Field Experience director worked to set up school district partners to assist the COE in building a program designed to continually inform and improve practice from the beginning practicum experience to clinical practice.

Table 1: BRIDGES: Building Relevant Integrated Developmentally Guided Experiences for Students

Elementary Major	All Majors	Secondary Majors
	<b>Pre-Education Courses</b> Foundations of Education & Human Relations	
<b>Advanced Block</b> Teaching & Assessing Reading Teaching of Mathematic Teaching of Science 40+ hours of field experience	<b>Beginning Block</b> Human Growth and Learning Beginning Field Experience 6-10 hours of field experience	<b>Advanced Block</b> Secondary Classroom Management Literacy & Learning 40+ hours of field experience
<b>Final Block</b> Teaching of Social Studies & Teaching of Reading & Language Arts 40+ hour field experience	<b>Intermediate Block</b> Applied Special Education Planning for Effective Teaching 40+ hour field experience	<b>Final Block</b> Special Methods in the Content Area 40+ hour field experience
<b>Clinical Practice</b> 14-16 week field experience	<b>Clinical Practice</b> 14-16 week field experience	<b>Clinical Practice</b> 14-16 week field experience

The theoretical framework of each course cumulatively builds the candidate's knowledge base, skills and dispositions as the candidate progresses from beginning, to intermediate, to final block and then clinical practice (student teaching). Throughout BRIDGES, candidates are fully supported by faculty, instructional coaches, and supervising teachers. Faculty and instructional coaches support candidates in the field experience by providing immediate guidance and feedback. Each candidate participates in 140+ coached/supervised hours throughout the blocked practicum experiences prior to entering their clinical practice. The candidates' performance is assessed using INTASC Standards at each level, utilizing rubrics which were developed from the final rubric used to assess candidates in the clinical practice. Scaffolded sets of competencies were developed for each practicum in the teacher education program. For each course that has a practicum experience 30% of the final grade is attached to the practicum (all or none of the 30% is earned by the candidate). If a candidate fails to meet minimum competency in the practicum they are not awarded the 30%, therefore they do not pass the course.

The college began using a commercial assessment product, LiveText, in the spring of 2012. LiveText replaced a previously used portfolio-based system. The product was first used to collect assignments. The second phase of implementation included using the field experience management tool. Beginning in the fall of 2013, the college used the system to communicate and track candidates as they moved through multiple field experiences including their clinical teaching semester. The system allowed for evaluative data to be collected from University as well as P-12 practitioners. Supervision, feedback and debriefing of the students' knowledge, skills and dispositions also occurs through formal and informal assessments, such as direct observations, videos, journals, lesson plans, papers, discussion, evaluation forms and reports.

Program renewal, redevelopment and revision has its triumphs and challenges. Each semester faculty, pre-service teacher candidates, instructional coaches, Field Experience staff, building administrators, and P-12 supervising teachers are asked for feedback. The continuous feedback has assisted those delivering the BRIDGES program with continuous data to assist in program improvement.

\*Authors are currently collating and analyzing the data from LiveText on the preservice teacher's experiences (benefits and challenges) in the BRIDGES program.

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