

## **Success during Practicum**

### **Be TAO**

Transparent Authentic Open

You have skills and talent – don't keep these hidden during practicum. This is not the time to be shy, it's the time to shine and create some educational magic. Connect with the kids (appropriately) and ask thoughtful questions.

### **Do your Homework**

We are in the information age, folks. Get online and learn about local districts and schools. Do this now. Be sure to do some digging before you ask a cooperating teacher or building leader some low level or super easy questions. **Example:** You want to know what time school starts for your placement site. Go to the schools website and find out. That's a low level question. (OR) You want to know when back-to-school night is. Should you send an email the cooperating teacher? Oh, no, please no. Check the school's website. Now, if you want to know what time to show up and support the teacher during back-to-school night...then yes, send an email message or call.

### **You have to Read**

This seems so obvious for a university student, however, many candidates fail to read important information that is given or sent to them. For future teachers, this looks bad and irresponsible. Teachers are seekers of information, so stay informed and stay on top of reading all important information. Future teachers who need their hands held during the licensure program do not do well when seeking a job. It's a tough market out there.

### **Be on Time**

Showing up late to your practicum school site looks bad and is unprofessional. Don't do it. Get up early and be on time. Make sure you are getting enough sleep so you do not fall asleep at the school site. (Yes, this has happened and CU looked badly.)

### **You are a Teacher**

As a licensure candidate, you are on course to becoming a licensed teacher. We have all taught someone something, so you are for sure a **real teacher**. Do not become a burden to your cooperating teacher. Step up and help out. Do not wait to be told what to do. Ask thoughtful questions and support student learning. Share the practicum assignments, requirements, and expectations with the cooperating teacher right away. Schedule the appropriate amount of time.

### **Professional Dress**

Cooperating teachers may have a casual dress style in the classroom, and that is fine for him/her – they have the job. Your university professors may also have a casual dress style – which is very Boulder. This is **not** OK for licensure candidates. You are trying to establish yourself as a licensed teacher and you want to look well groomed and grown-up. The clothes you use for partying are most likely not appropriate for a school site (time and place, folks). You also want to be clean and smell good – no one likes a smelly teacher – or a teacher with bad breath. You may have to purchase new clothes, but remember you can use these new and professional clothes during student teaching.

### **Test your Outfit**

Be sure to look at yourself in the mirror and move around to make sure nothing is popping out of your clothing. Lean down, as if you were talking to a student seated at a desk, to see if you are exposing any

extra flesh or body parts. Lean over, as if you were reaching for something in the classroom, to see if your clothing stays intact. Squat down to make sure your clothing stays intact. Sit crisscross apple sauce to make sure your clothing is appropriate. The point here – let’s avoid unnecessary nudity or unplanned lingerie fashion shows in the classroom. (A whale tail is **not** a good look.)

### **Shoes**

Wear comfortable shoes because teachers are on their feet a lot. (*A teacher on her feet is worth two in a seat.*) Do not wear any flip flops. Sorry, but the school setting is not a beach. Plus flip flops make that loud and clappy sound, not everyone should share their crusty feet with a school community, and walking through crowded school hallways – with a student stepping on the back of your flip flops can be quite embarrassing. (*You don’t want to end up on You Tube, do you?*)

Closed toe shoes are highly recommended and often required (especially for the lab courses). Check the school’s policy on this.

### **Piercings / Tattoos**

Teachers are individuals with their unique likes and styles – yes, we know this. Schools are typically conservative in nature, climate, and culture - and often teachers must comply with these hidden or unspoken rules once they are employed. Remember, teachers are in the service sector, and they are serving a community. (*Yes, it does matter how you look – because this is important to the families you are serving.*) Find out what the school’s policy and/or culture are around piercings and tattoos. You may need to cover up your tattoos and/or remove your piercings.

### **Communication**

Learn to project your voice, speak steadily, and use proper grammar. Teachers are highly educated people and teachers should sound that way. If you get nervous talking in front of others or large groups – get some help.

### **Email Communication**

I’ll repeat: Teachers are highly educated people and teachers should sound that way. This includes email communication. Leave the texting language to texting. Use your [@colorado.edu](mailto:colorado.edu) email account (not [iamsexy@gmail.com](mailto:iamsexy@gmail.com) – you get the point). Set up professional email signature. Write complete sentences and pay attention to the tone in your email messages.

Make sure your email settings allow you to maintain an email thread. It’s a bit on the annoying side to have someone send an email, refer to a previous exchange, and the previous exchange is not there. Fix your settings. Educators have a lot going on – so be clear and specific in your email communications.

### **Social Media**

How often do you Google yourself? You should be doing this once a month, if not more. Clean up your social media persona. This is very important.

### **Mobile Phone Addiction**

If your mobile phone had possessed you and you need to check it every other minute – leave it in the car or at your home. Do not bring the mobile phone into the classroom if you are unable to control yourself. If you have an important call you are expecting (family emergency, call to serve at the White House, etc.), explain this to the cooperating teacher and only use the phone for that “special” situation. Don’t worry – Facebook, Google +, and Twitter (and any other social media you enjoy) will still be available after your practicum time slot.

**Networking / Marketing**

Spend as much time as possible at school sites. There is a lot to learn. Talk to other educators. Get to know them. Have them get to know you. Get some business cards made. Create a professional blog and/or portfolio. Keep your resume current and ready to share.

Sometimes when it comes down to you or another applicant getting a student teaching position or actual teaching job – it's all about who you know.

**Mandated Reporting**

Any person who suspects child abuse or neglect is required to report. It's a teacher's job to help keep students safe. Keep your eyes and ears open. Talk with your cooperating teacher, immediately, if you suspect something.

*You never get a second chance to make a strong first impression.  
Have a GREAT semester! ☺*