

Guide to Early Field Experiences in Music Education at the University of Colorado - Boulder

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Introduction

Early field experiences are an important component of the teacher education process. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education currently requires all teacher candidates to complete 800 hours of field experience, including student teaching, as part of their preservice training. Music education majors at the University of Colorado are required to complete 150 hours of early field experience in K-12 settings prior to the student teaching semester. This early field experience is acquired through a series of practicum placements and internships that are linked to music teacher education courses:

- Introduction to Music Education (25 hours, sophomore year, public school music contexts)
- ProSeminar I: School and Society (25 hours, sophomore year, community education context)
- ProSeminar II: Teaching in American Schools (25 hours, junior year, diverse school context)
- General, Choral, or Instrumental Methods (25 hours, junior year, public school music contexts)
- Introduction to Student Teaching (50 hours, senior year, potential music student teaching contexts)

The purpose of this guide is to answer common questions about early field experiences and to assist mentor teachers in making these experiences both positive and educational.

Early Field Experience Goals

As a music education faculty, we believe that preservice teachers may benefit from early field experiences in numerous and specific ways. Four main goals or outcomes, however, are considered critical for our students. Music education majors at CU-Boulder must:

- gain meaningful experience working with students at elementary, middle, and high school levels
- become confident and competent when teaching general music (nonperformance) and/or ensemble performance classes
- become confident and competent when working with diverse student populations or in diverse school contexts
- be able to identify at least two viable student teaching placements by the end of the junior year and six viable student teaching placements no later than one month into the internship semester

Characteristics of Effective Early Field Experiences

Research has shown that early field experience is most effective when practicum students gain hands on experience and receive extensive feedback about their teaching from a mentor teacher. Teaching experiences also need to be progressive in nature, so that practicum students and teaching interns are continuously challenged to grow as educators without being overwhelmed by the process. We have identified five types of activity that music education majors might engage in as part of their early field experience. Definitions and examples of each type of activity appear on the next page.

Types of Early Field Experience Activity

- **Observation** – observe assigned mentor teacher and students over successive class periods
 - getting familiar with context-specific policies, procedural issues, and classroom routines in preparation for providing teaching assistance or engaging in introductory teaching
- **Teaching Assistance** - assist individuals within the class context per mentor teacher requests
 - providing clerical (e.g., distributing music) or maintenance (e.g., repairing instruments) support
 - helping individual students to execute tasks, complete assignments, or perform parts
 - redirecting off-task students or tutoring at-risk students
 - accompanying or modeling for the class; singing/playing as part of the ensemble
- **Introductory Teaching** – assume teacher role for limited size group and/or time (5-10 min)
 - introducing a new song or activity to a general music class
 - remedial work (sectionals) with individuals or small groups
 - conducting warm-ups or sight-reading a piece with the ensemble
- **Apprentice Teaching** – assume teacher role for entire group and moderate length of time (15-20 min)
 - planning for and teaching a complete activity within a general music class
 - planning for and teaching warm-ups and one piece of repertoire (or one portion of a larger work)
- **Internship Teaching** – assume teacher role for entire group and more extended period of time (25-50 min)
 - planning for and teaching an entire general music class or two classes in succession
 - planning for and teaching warm-ups and two pieces of repertoire (for an entire ensemble class)
- **Exploration** – one-time observations of a variety of teachers
 - getting familiar with context-specific policies, procedural issues, and classroom routines in an effort to identify additional possibilities for internship and student teaching placements
 - applies to junior level practicum and senior level internship only

While the progression from one type of activity to the next should be very similar at each stage of early field experience, the actual amount of time devoted to each type of activity will vary in accordance with the experience and expertise level demonstrated by each music education major. General guidelines that identify the number of hours to be allocated for each type of field experience at each level are depicted in the attached figure. Please note that junior level practicum students are expected to engage in exploration activity near the end of the semester, while senior level interns are expected to engage in exploration activity at the very beginning of the semester.

Early Field Experience Requirements and Responsibilities

All music-related early field experience hours must be documented using standard forms provided by the Chair of Music Education. These forms are placed in the student's undergraduate file upon completion of each semester of field experience. Beyond documentation, practicum students and interns typically are expected to complete targeted observation reports and/or mentor teacher interviews, develop instructional plans, produce videotapes of selected teaching episodes, and self-assess their teaching videos. Mentor teachers are responsible for signing documentation forms, completing a basic evaluation form for each practicum student or intern, and providing constructive feedback through informal conversation and written comments. Graduate teaching assistants are responsible for assisting and/or supervising early field experience students (music education faculty assist and supervise music student teachers).

Early Field Experience Configurations

