Clinical Experiences

Library Science

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Dear Teacher/Librarian,

Your generous agreement to sponsor a library science student in your library is very much appreciated. This is an important learning experience for the student that will help initiate them in the wonderful profession that we practice. The clinical practice experience is the counterpart of a student teaching experience; it is an opportunity to participate in the day-to-day life of the profession. Please help the student to become the high quality professional needed in the modern school library information center. The student has to value the school community and recognize the worth of collaboration, collegiality, and service to the school stakeholders.

The MTSU program is grounded in the ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Preparation of School Librarians (2010), Empowering Learners, and Standards for the 21st Century Learner. As you may know, the program is delivered online. Students from all over the state are enrolled in the program. Guided discussions, collaborative projects, interviews with librarians, and observations in school and public libraries connect students to each other, to the instructors, and to practicing librarians. We work diligently to teach the students both theory and practical applications. In these days of high-stakes accountability, librarians must have a sound grasp of the “why” along with the “how” of library practice and librarianship. The clinical experience is integrated into the library science program at MTSU. We rely upon the clinical experience to teach the daily routines. Here are examples of the relationship between the coursework and the clinical experience.

- The cataloging class teaches the foundation of creating a basic cataloging record (ISBD, AACR2, MaRC, LCSH, and RDA) in a MaRC record format. Use of a specific automated system is part of the clinical experience—circulation, catalog record input, reports.
- Lesson plans based on Standards for the 21st Century Learner and on NETS are created in several classes. Collaboration and classroom management are part of the clinical experience.
- Students have explored 75-100 pieces of literature for children and young adults. Reading aloud to students should be part of the clinical experience.

The clinical experience is planned as a time of application of skills, knowledge, and dispositions learned in coursework.

The student placed with you has to complete many requirements as part of a portfolio assignment. There are additional assignments as well. These are some of the activities that the student must experience while under your care:

1. Attendance at faculty meetings and Parent/Teacher Organization meetings or discussions with teachers/parents.
2. Preparation of lesson plans to integrate information literacy skills into a curriculum area. This must include collaboration with a teacher for a curriculum topic being taught in the classroom.
3. Instruction and practice in the use of specialty technology that your library may use—MediaCast, SharePoint, Web site maintenance, etc.

4. Performance of and notes on processing routines. This is crucial since the students have very little time to practice processing functions during the library science program. However, a few hours of this are sufficient.

5. Cataloging with an integrated library system such as Alexandria or Follett. Since school systems across the state use many different ILS products, our program does not teach the use of a specific ILS. Students are taught to do original cataloguing so that they understand the foundation of good catalog records. I am relying upon the clinical experience sponsor to provide guidance in use of a specific ILS.

6. Collection management—book repair, inventory, shelf management, periodical management, and other activities that you complete during your school year.

7. Planning and executing Book fairs and other special events.

8. Budget planning—share how you receive and allocate your budget

The activities are planned to provide the wide range of experiences that school library information specialists actually encounter. You may assign the student to any activities with which you need assistance or to activities that you think are valuable to their training. There may be activities not covered in the manual; you have the discretion to add these to the student’s clinical practice experience.

Repetitive project type activities are discouraged since they are often too narrowly focused to provide the genuine learning that is the goal of the clinical practice experience. If you have a project to be completed and would like to assign the student to it, please limit it to only a portion of the clinical practice experience time frame. You will also have to ensure that opportunities are provided to fulfill the required elements. The best experience is a hands-on one. Please let the student participate and fulfill duties as much as possible. Discuss the “why” of decision making as you go through the day. The student should be a librarian while they are in the library with you. Because the student has so much to learn from you, it is necessary that you are present when they are working with you.

The student has requirements for a Portfolio. There is some factual information that will be needed by the student. Your time and help will be needed in compiling this information.

**The following assessments are needed:**

*For the Student*

**One formative observation written by you** as the student completes 35 clinical practice experience hours.

- Write and discuss these with the student
• Any problems with performance or attitude need to be communicated quickly so that the student has a chance to improve.
  ○ Include a TEAM assessment rubric

For the University instructor

• **OPTIONAL:** A mid-practice summary of the student’s performance. Send this to the university instructor. This may be identical to the Formative observation, but can be used to inform the university instructor if there are problems in the placement. It does not have to be shared with the student.
• **One Summative** assessment is written at the end of the clinical practice experience.
  ▪ **Narrative form:** This is a broad summary of their performance and attitude as it exists at the end of the clinical practice experience.
  ▪ **TEAM assessment rubric:** Use the state form for librarian evaluation to evaluate the student. Of course, there will be areas that will not apply since this is an initiation experience. The student will provide a copy for your use.

These can be mailed, faxed, or emailed to the instructor. Please send the evaluations as quickly as possible since a grade cannot be assigned until they are received.

You may, of course, supervise and direct the student at any time during the placement. I am available for candid communication at all times during the placement. If you have any immediate concerns during the clinical practice experience, call me without hesitation.

Thank you so much for your contribution to the education of future school library information specialists!

Sincerely,

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