

What Would You Do?

If you've finished reading *Preparing for a Student Teacher*, the first book of *Student Teaching: The Cooperating Teacher Series*, then you are ready to practice your supervisory skills by problem-solving the following four case studies. These are either actual vignettes or composites of similar situations that have happened during the student teaching phase.

In real-time situations, the best course of action takes into account the persons involved and the specific setting; however, we do provide some commentary for guiding your decisions.

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Student Teaching: The Cooperating Teacher Series

Supervising Student Teacher the Professional Way, 7 ed.



CASE STUDY 1: IS IT NORMAL TO BE ANXIOUS?

Mia, your future student teacher, came with all the qualifications that you had ever hoped for. She was an honor student competing to be the *summa cum laude* graduate from the college. Your preliminary assessment was that she had a superior grasp of the content that she was to teach. She had a charming personality and excellent recommendations. In spite of all her positive qualities, she confessed that she was apprehensive about this phase of her training and asked you if it is normal to be anxious about beginning student teaching. What do you say?

1. Reassure her that this is a normal phenomenon.
2. Have a conference with her and try to determine if the concerns are more severe than one would normally expect.
3. Suggest that she talk with a first-year teacher or two or any other student teachers who might be in the building. Their comments might present some perspective on her feelings.
4. Remind her of her prior accomplishments that have prepared her for the student teaching phase.
5. Share your initial student teaching feelings and how those subsided.
6. Find out her reservations and discuss ways to prepare her to face her concerns.
7. Assure her that you are there to support her in this endeavor.
8. What other actions might you consider?



Comment

Experts in student teaching would almost unanimously answer the question with the response that it is indeed normal to be nervous. Most new situations present initial anxiety. The critical focus for the cooperating teacher must be on how to help the student teacher become less anxious.

Henry, M. A. & Weber, A. (2010). Before the student teaching experience begins. In Supervising Student Teachers the Professional Way, 7th ed. (pp. 18-19, Case Study 3). Latham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.



CASE STUDY 2: STILL A CO-ED

You have witnessed your student teacher, Renee, checking her e-mail and texting while you are teaching. She has missed the established arrival time by ten minutes three times in two weeks. She often wears clothing emblazoned with her school mascot. Her language is laden with “you guys” and “like.” On the other hand, she is attentive when you discuss teaching matters, pitches in when asked, has a cheery personality, and enthusiastically speaks of herself as a future teacher. What can be done to help Renee transition into an active professional?

1. Discuss the need for her to discontinue personal communication during the school day so that she can give all her attention to the teaching role.
2. Review the established arrival time and explain what the principal’s procedure is for this conduct in his teachers.
3. Discuss specific ways in which she can immediately present a teacher image through words, actions, and appearance.
4. Discuss how she can transfer her future teacher image into the present student teaching experience.
5. Make sure that the university supervisor is aware of her actions.
6. What other actions might you consider?



Comment

Student teachers may be unaware that they are continuing to portray a college image. Often an innocent oversight in word or action can lead to future problems. A supportive cooperating teacher will need to address these issues promptly to provide a career perspective on the situation and then to brainstorm alternatives.

Henry, M. A. & Weber, A. (2010). Before the student teaching experience begins. In Supervising Student Teachers the Professional Way, 7th ed. (pp. 51, Case Study 11). Latham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.



CASE STUDY 3: NOT ENOUGH ROOM

The walls of the classroom seem to close in on you now that you have a student teacher. Since you are accustomed to working alone in a classroom, your student teacher, Leigh, is proving to be a distraction and this is leading to some frustration. She seems not to have anywhere to go in the room except close to you and you constantly feel compelled to explain what you are doing. You are not certain that Leigh is as sensitive to these concerns as you, but you want to make some changes in order to feel more comfortable and to be able to communicate with her more effectively. What do you do?

1. Have a conversation with her and disclose your feelings.
2. Find some alternative activities for Leigh that will give you more opportunity to follow your normal routine.
3. Plan to be out of the room more so that she can work with the class and you can have some time alone.
4. Find work space for Leigh in the room that gives her ownership.
5. Examine your own views about collegiality.
6. Discuss various classroom teacher tasks and chores that the student teacher can engage in by developing a “to-do” list as a reference point.
7. Set a block of time aside during each planning period when each of you works alone and a different time for mutual exchanges.
8. What other actions might you consider?



Comment

It might be well to do some searching to determine the basis of the frustration. Is it a reluctance to share a class with another person? Is it an irritation in dealing with a different type of personality? Is the difficulty caused by the fact that the student teacher seems to need more of your time? Once a cooperating teacher determines the basic problem, an acceptable alternative will be easier to select.

Henry, M. A. & Weber, A. (2010). Before the student teaching experience begins. In Supervising Student Teachers the Professional Way, 7th ed. (pp. 64-65, Case Study 13). Latham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.



CASE STUDY 4: REJECTING THE SUPERVISOR'S SUGGESTIONS

The college supervisor spent several hours visiting your student teacher's classes and conferring with each of you. Her primary concern appeared to be to help Bill improve in some of his weaker areas and her suggestions offered alternatives that could lead to better performance. Bill became upset and said that the college supervisor had been too critical of his work. His final comment was, "How can she make any valid judgments? She was not here long enough to know what this class is like." Since you recognize some validity in the supervisor's suggestions, what course of action do you take?

1. Remain noncommittal for a while, giving the student teacher time to process his feelings.
2. Encourage the student teacher to follow up on the recommendations.
3. Give validity to the suggestions by mentioning what you have noticed and discussing how the alternatives may help the students.
4. Present the college supervisor as an advocate. Remind the student teacher of the college supervisor's experience and perspective.
5. Ask the student teacher to analyze his decisions for the lesson and then discuss them further with his supervisor.
6. Determine if you have provided the college supervisor with enough information about this particular teaching environment.
7. What other actions might you consider?



Comment

There will be little or no growth if the comments are summarily rejected. It is comfortable to remain with an established routine, but teaching is a dynamic process and must involve reflection and modification. In whatever way seems feasible, a student teacher should be encouraged to reflect on the recommendations and to either accept or have a sound reason for rejecting them. At the same time, most college supervisors realize that they witness only "snapshots" of the student teacher's experience. With this in mind, most supervisors will ask student teachers for an explanation of what was observed before making sweeping recommendations for change. If the supervisor does not ask the student teacher to provide some context for his actions, the cooperating teacher can help provide the "big picture" for the college supervisor.

Henry, M. A. & Weber, A. (2010). Before the student teaching experience begins. In Supervising Student Teachers the Professional Way, 7th ed. (pp. 108-109, Case Study 24). Latham: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

If you would like to practice solving more situations, over ninety student teaching case studies can be found in *Supervising Student Teachers the Professional Way, 7th edition* which is published by Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2010.