

September 1, 2011

Dear Cooperating Teacher,

We want to take this opportunity at the start of the semester to say, "Thank you!" We are well aware of the fact that one reason our JMU teacher candidates are so well prepared is because of the numerous field experiences they receive. And that would not happen without you! We are also aware of the time and effort it takes to nurture these novices. Thank you for giving back to the profession with that time and effort. We sincerely appreciate your willingness to guide these young teacher candidates.

The students you have welcomed into your classroom are close to the end of their preparation. This semester, they have their last education classes and the two-day practicum. In the spring, they will student teach. They are that close to being "real teachers." Because of that, we encourage you to provide as many teaching experiences as you believe they are prepared to handle. While the stated purpose of the practicum is to design and implement an inquiry project, that is just one piece of their responsibilities. Our expectation is that these students will be planning and teaching at least once a week. We hope this will be an acceptable expectation. We firmly believe that without that consistent planning and teaching, they will not be prepared for the reality of teaching.

In an effort to "go green," the College of Education has decided to use electronic sources for sharing information about each practicum. The documents that describe the components of each practicum, necessary forms, and evaluative tools can now be found on the College's web site. To find the documents listed below, please refer to

<http://www.jmu.edu/coe/eere/PracticumInformation.shtml>

- A description of each practicum that details responsibilities for the practicum student, supervisor, and cooperating teacher
- The evaluation form which is used for both mid-term and final evaluation of your practicum student
- Policy and procedure information in regards to attendance, absences, notification of teacher and supervisor
- The JMU lesson plan template

The JMU practicum students will be starting practicum the second week of JMU classes. Their last week of practicum will be the last week of classes for JMU. Your practicum student can give you the specific dates. In addition, the practicum students will follow the JMU's calendar for attendance. This means that they will not be in practicum on days that the university is closed. We told the students to share any dates JMU is not in session so you can plan accordingly. Other policies about attendance such as make-up days, tardiness, etc. can be found on the web page listed above.

The JMU practicum students are expected to bring you additional information. On the first day, the practicum student will have a sign-in calendar to post in your room. Each week, she or he will sign in noting the time. The JMU supervisor may look for this sheet. Also, on the first day, you will receive a completed student profile sheet. This one page document will have a photograph of the practicum student and information about experiences she or he has had to date. Then, within two weeks you should receive a typed list of assignments the practicum student needs to complete in your class. You can use this list to talk with the practicum student about a possible timeline for completing these assignments. Please note that while the practicum students may have specific lessons they must teach for the education classes, we encourage students to plan and teach at least once a week. The more opportunities they receive, the stronger their skills will become.

Those of you who have worked with us in the past know that JMU supervisors are assigned to work with the practicum student. These faculty or former educators will be in your school shortly. We are confident that you will enjoy working with them. You will find them supportive and accessible. We are in the process of assigning supervisors now. When this is complete, we will email you the name and email address of the supervisor working with your student. In addition, should questions, concerns, and/or suggestions arise, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Hughes, Coordinator of the Elementary Education Program. She can be reached at hughesma@jmu.edu, 540.596-3862 (office) or 434.985.3051 (home).

Again, many thanks for all you do to help our teacher candidates grow as professionals. We look forward to another successful semester.

Sincerely,
The Elementary Education Faculty