

Field Placement Policies

During the internship, prospective teachers work closely with their mentor teachers, MSU field instructors, and MSU course instructors to put together in practice what they have learned and continue to learn about subject matter, curriculum, pedagogy and learners. Intern placements are made carefully to ensure that interns have ample opportunities not only for practical experience but also for thoughtful reflection upon the analysis of that experience.

Each year we place approximately 500 interns, along with approximately 1200 teacher candidates in earlier stages of the program. As we place them, we must balance a range of considerations as described below. Teacher candidates should be familiar with placement policies in order to understand how decisions are made. Teacher candidates should especially note that:

- We do not permit teacher candidates to seek their own placements
- We ask teacher candidates to express some of their preferences regarding placements, and we do attempt to satisfy those preferences, but we CANNOT GUARANTEE to do so.

When making placements, we strive to follow these principles:

Placements are made in partner schools

We place teacher candidates in schools where we have developed or are developing school-university partnerships for teacher education. This means that whenever possible, teacher candidates are placed in groups within schools that are within a compact geographic area, rather than being distributed across many schools with only one or two teacher candidates in each. When teacher candidates are placed in groups in compact areas, MSU personnel can spend more of their time working with teacher candidates and developing strong partnerships with schools and teachers.

Placements match the certificate

We place all teacher candidates in situations that match the teaching certificates that they want to earn. Placing all candidates in situations that match their intended certificates takes priority over placing any candidate in a preferred grade or situation.

Placements respond to urban need

We give high priority to placements in schools in urban centers that serve students who live in poverty, who live amidst substantial social problems, and/or who have special needs. We place teacher candidates where they can learn to teach diverse students in diverse settings. Michigan teaching certificates authorize the persons who hold them to teach all Michigan children in the given grades and subject matters. When teacher candidates accept admission to our program, they accept the obligation to prepare themselves to teach all those children, in all those places.

Placements for each candidate are from a range of settings

In general, we do not place interns in the same placement as their senior year unless there is a strong reason for an exception. That is, we prefer to give teacher candidates varied experiences in more than one setting across their program.

Placements protect the integrity of evaluation by avoiding preexisting bias

We avoid placing teacher candidates in situations where they are already known or may already have close associations with school personnel or students. The operating principle here is that evaluations of performance should not be subject to preexisting bias. For example:

- We do not place teacher candidates in school districts they attended as K-12 students, unless the district was a large urban district (e.g. Lansing, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Chicago). In this event, we do not place teacher candidates in the schools they attended as K-12 students.
- We avoid placement in districts (or, in the case of large districts, in schools) where a close relative or significant other* of the teacher candidate is employed or enrolled.

Placements for pre-internship courses are in the Lansing area

Prior to the internship, we place teacher candidates only in the Lansing area. Most teacher candidates are carrying a full academic program only part of which is in teacher education. Therefore, we place teacher candidates in TE 301, 302, and TE 401-408 only in schools within an approximately 30 minute drive from MSU.

Placements for the internship are made in several geographic areas

For the internship we place teacher candidates in several areas across the state, and particular in major populations centers including the Lansing area, the Grand Rapids area, the Detroit area, and the Chicago area. Some areas, including Chicago, require an additional application. Priority for placement in Chicago is given to candidates with high-needs endorsement areas requested by Chicago Public Schools, and to UECP students, GECP students, and Urban Immersion fellows.

Placements are within a reasonable commuting distance.

We attempt to place teacher candidates within a reasonable distance of their homes, within our areas of placement in Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Detroit. We define “reasonable commuting distance” to be within approximately a 45-minute drive one way. In the southeast Michigan, commuting times may be longer.

* Relatives/significant others means a connection between persons by blood, marriage, adoption, domestic partnership or other personal relationship in which objectivity might be impaired.

Placement area preferences are not guaranteed.

Indicating a preference for a particular area does not guarantee placement in that area. The teacher preparation program coordinators will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate students' preferences for particular placement areas. However, when the number of requests for a placement area is greater than the number of placements available, a lottery system may be used to determine who will be placed in that area. If a placement is offered in a requested placement area, and a teacher candidate declines it, that teacher candidate will not be guaranteed another placement in that area. That is, if the initial placement is declined, the candidate will go to the bottom of the list of candidates desiring that area.

Placements are subject to change

Placements are subject to change at any time due to unanticipated circumstances beyond our control. Should this occur, we will make every attempt to find an alternative placement as soon as possible. During the summer, however, it is extremely difficult to contact school personnel. Therefore, placements that need to be changed over the summer may take longer to confirm.