

PART ONE:
THE STUDENT GUIDE
TO
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD
PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

What is the Practicum?

The practicum experience in Early Childhood Development at Bunker Hill Community College is the final phase of your educational experience in the Associate of Science Degree plan. The practicum gives you a chance to try out all the concepts that you have been learning in classes over the last several semesters. The practicum is an experience which allows you to "practice" your new profession in a safe and secure way.

The security of this practice is possible because so many persons will be helping you to do your very best job of teaching young children. The first person helping you is the faculty supervisor assigned to your practicum course from Bunker Hill. She (or he) will be the person responsible for seeing that your experience is interesting, fulfilling, and challenging. You will be expected to do things that you have never done before. While this may be a bit anxiety producing, the faculty supervisor will help you to see that you can be a successful teacher in the classroom with young children.

The second contact person to help you complete a successful practicum experience is the supervisor assigned to you at the center where you are placed to do your practicum work. This supervisor is usually a head teacher in the classroom in which you work. Sometimes, he/she is the director of the center and is helpful to you even though he/she is not in your classroom every minute you are there. This is especially true if you are completing a practicum experience in a "work-site" location where you are already employed.

The third persons to help might surprise you. The other students in the practicum experience will prove very helpful to you in understanding what is happening in your center and how to interpret and cope with the activities and expectations put upon you.

Needless to say, the experience is full of excitement, anxiety, and learning. You will have a good time during this period and be able to say at the end that you truly do know what is required to be a professional early childhood teacher.

Why is the Practicum Done This Way?

The practicum is designed as the last part of the associate degree

program, to be taken during the last two semesters of your work. This is so for several reasons.

First, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) requires several aspects of education and experience in order to be certified as an Early Childhood Teacher or Lead Teacher. By doing the practicum last, you have not only met all the educational requirements for Lead Teacher, but you will be credited by DEEC with 18 months work experience and be able to meet the experiential requirements for Lead Teacher, too.

Secondly, the Associate of Science Degree in Early Childhood Development is an academic degree as well as a vocational program. We want you not only to be able to go to work in quality child care programs, but we want you to be able to have many choices for your future. With the additional credits received in your associate degree, this is possible. You can transfer on to get more college level training, you can choose from several other subject areas and complete a Bachelor's degree at a four-year college, or you can move forward in your professional career, usually receiving better pay and benefits because of your level of education. Some colleges do not require a practicum at all, others do the practice teaching early in the program to get you used to doing work with children, and still others only require a fraction of the practice hours BHCC does. Because our work is structured as an experience that meets the state's requirements as well as being seen as the best possible in early childhood practice for students, you will have a much better set of credentials for getting a good job when you graduate.

Why is the Practicum Important for Your Future?

The practicum is very important for your future. That is why we do everything we can at BHCC to see that you can complete the experience without a lot of undue hassle. There are several reasons your future depends on a successful practicum experience.

First, by doing the practicum, you will be able to try out your ideas under the guidance of a supervising faculty member and a center staff member. This gives you several months to see what is required for this kind of work and to have constant feedback as to what is working and what might be improved.

Second, in the practicum experience you will be attending a biweekly seminar led by the faculty member assigned from BHCC. The

faculty member will help you and other members of the practicum class understand the workings of the center, the activity of your teaching team at the center, and the development of the children. Rarely, except in this kind of student teaching experience, is this kind of support available to you in the early childhood classroom.

Third, your practicum experience will count as work experience not only for state certification, but also, as a part of your formal resume when you begin to look for a job. Whether you go on to get more credit at a four-year college, or you stay on as an employee in a child care center, the practicum serves as a work experience, just like a paid job. This is invaluable to your growth as a professional in the field.

Fourth, your practicum experience requires that you create a portfolio to document your work in the program. This portfolio will include written journals, photographs, curriculum plans, environmental analysis, child observations, and more. This portfolio can be used when interviewing for a job or when applying for additional educational experiences or credentials.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

What is the Process and Why is it Important?

The Department of Early Childhood, Education, and Human Services requires a formal application process for all practicum and internship activities done by students majoring in one of the areas within the Department. The process is important as it allows the members of the Department to assure that students are following their degree plans and continue the required activities for graduation. Additionally, placements are required for all practicum or internships and must be arranged a semester ahead of time to assure that the student's needs are met appropriately. This means that an application process must be completed the semester before enrolling in the practicum course so that placement is assured and can begin at the first of the semester, assuring enough time to finish all the hours required. Group meetings for potential practicum students are held each semester to explain the process and to take applications. See the Department chair for more information on these meetings.

Procedures Required for a Successful Practicum

The procedures which must be followed to begin a successful

practicum are fairly simple, but they must be followed carefully to assure enrollment in the course. They include several steps.

The semester before you expect to do the practicum:

(1) You must meet personally with the Department chair or the faculty supervisor for the practicum course. You must fill out a set of paperwork for the Department application for practicum enrollment. Following your receipt of a letter inviting you to an orientation about the practicum, you will be able to meet with Department chair and will fill out the form during this meeting.

(2) During the application process, you will be required to provide the college with permission to submit to a Criminal Offense Records Investigation, a CORI, done to assure that you are legally able to work with young children. This process is handled confidentially through the Department Chair and Dean's Office. A CORI pinpoints any legal issues which you might have with a conviction of a crime making it impossible to do work with children. If you are concerned about this process, please see the Department Chair as soon as possible.

(3) Meet with the faculty supervisor to clarify your placement site preferences. If you are employed at a center, you will need to get permission to use this site for your experience. If you are not employed, talk to the faculty supervisor about the sites which we use for placement and feel reassured that your particular needs will be met. BHCC assigns placement sites (or approves work site). Permission of the Department chair and the faculty supervisor is required for all placement sites. Under no circumstances is the student able to arrange his/her own placement site.

(4) Because the practicum courses require permission of the Department chair before enrolling, get a signed "Permission to Enroll in Coursework" form from your faculty supervisor. Enrollment Services will not enroll you in the course without this permission. (See appendix for sample form).

After the practicum experience begins, you must:

(5) Attend the seminars and begin to work at your center placement within the first few weeks of the semester. [The next section of this guide will detail placement sites for you.]

(6) Complete an DEEC approved First Aid course for child care personnel. These courses are offered primarily by the American Red Cross. You must complete an approved course and provide proof of completion to your faculty supervisor before the end of the fall

practicum experience.

(7) Complete all assignments made in the seminar and design a portfolio of your work, showing competency in all required areas (see appendix for sample syllabus and list of field competencies).

Student Selection for Practicum Enrollment

Students must meet the following requirements **BEFORE** application to enroll will be accepted.

(1) Reach a minimum of a 2.25 **cumulative** grade point average in the semester before application. (Those students with a GPA between 2.0-2.25 will be accepted on a probationary basis ONLY pending outcomes of final grades prior to fall practicum enrollment. If the student's GPA falls below 2.0, students must wait until the GPA is raised to be considered for practicum enrollment.)

(2) Complete at least 30 hours of requirements in the A.S. degree program prior to enrollment in the practicum.

(3) Complete, at a minimum, ECE 103, ECE 101, ECE 104, ECE 106, ENG 111, and ENG 112 with a grade of "C" or better prior to enrollment. (The Department also recommends that students have completed ECE 102, ECE 117 and PSY 101.)

(3) Pass all ECE courses taken with a grade of "C" or better.

(4) Follow the Department application procedures, including giving permission for a CORI, in a timely manner and no later than the end of spring semester prior to fall enrollment, and be approved for practicum by the Department's chair or practicum committee.

Acceptance to the Early Childhood Development Program does not ensure a practicum placement for a student. Anytime a student is judged by his/her instructor to be a danger to him or herself, to children, to other students, or other professionals, before placement or while in a practicum, that instructor may temporarily delay or terminate the student's practicum experience, pending careful review by the appropriate team headed by the Department chair. Further action, up to, and including withdrawal from the course or dismissal from the program will be determined by the review team in consultation with the Division Dean and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Students will have the right to appeal the decision through the college's established grievance procedures. To be readmitted to the practicum course, the student must follow the Department's procedures for readmission. (See appendix for these policies and procedures).

Student Responsibilities

Students have several responsibilities once they have made application to the practicum and been accepted for enrollment. In addition to the activities delineated above, three other duties are required. First, the student must be able to work a total of 300 hours over a two-semester period (approximately 25 weeks). This will involve about 12 hours per week in your center site. Hours are arranged according to center and student's schedules and have considerable flexibility.

Second, the student must be able to attend the center as arranged in a responsible, dependable manner. The practicum experience is usually an unpaid work experience, but this fact does not mean that the student is not expected to be as dependable as a paid worker. All the rules of paid employment apply and excessive absenteeism or other unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated. Unprofessional behavior may result in termination of the student's experience.

Third, the student must also be willing to follow all the procedures and policies set down by the center, regardless of his/her own feelings or judgments about the practices. The centers used for placements are professional sites and are able to set policy for the children and families which they serve. Some centers require other procedures and forms be filed by students before placement. These might include a more thorough medical report or an additional criminal records check done by the state. These policies are routine for some centers and should not cause the student alarm. Most importantly, students are required to follow all center rules and to maintain a professional demeanor at all times.

Finally, there are two types of placements: those known as "student-only" sites and those serving "employee-students". For those that are working as a student in a site and are not being paid, no other work requirements beyond the practicum course expectations need to be met. The student who is also employed by the center (for pay) must not only complete the practicum requirements but must also continue to follow the work responsibilities for his/her employer. Every effort will be made to keep conflicts between these two sets of expectations to a minimum. However, as delineated under the "Week-to-Week" section in this guide, employee-students are expected to do more than just their everyday activities required for employment in order to fulfill the practicum requirements. A completed portfolio showing competency in all

areas is required by all students.

Department and Faculty Supervisor Responsibilities

The Department will assign a faculty supervisor to be in charge of the center visitation and seminar required by the course. The faculty supervisor will set up a seminar schedule to meet at least biweekly with small groups of students. Discussions will include the happenings at each center, individual student concerns, and faculty planned activities. Portfolio development will be discussed in the seminars.

In addition to the seminars, the faculty supervisor will visit the center of each practicum student several times during the two semesters. During these visits, the faculty member will observe the student in the classroom, note interactions with children and other adults, and provide the student with written feedback as to the observation. Questions will be discussed about the observation along with plans for continuing activity and interaction in the program. Students will respond in writing to this feedback for a two-way dialogue between the faculty and the student.

During the mid-term period and at the end of the final practicum experience, the faculty supervisor will meet with the student to discuss the student's performance and steps for more growth during the final practicum experience. Center supervisors are asked to be involved in this feedback process by having a similar conference at which time the midterm report is filled out and is then given to the faculty member (see appendix for copy of midterm report). For those in employee sites, these conferences may be done differently to coincide with the employee/student's supervision schedule at the work site. A similar conference will take place for all students at the end of the final practicum between the student and the faculty supervisor.

Potential Problems.....Being Prepared

The best way to avoid problems is to be prepared and to take steps to prevent undue hassles from occurring. Three areas often lead to difficulties for students.

(1) Time. Students frequently feel that the multiple hours required per week is overwhelming and they have difficulty getting all their studies done. It might be useful to take a lighter course load the final two semesters when you do your practicum. It is definitely helpful to do this if you have other responsibilities such as other paid

employment or family responsibilities.

(2) Energy. Students often feel very tired during the first few weeks of the practicum. This is usually because the new experience causes a lot of anxiety and makes you feel tired. Plan on getting plenty of rest and eat sensibly as you start your new assignment. You will feel much better once you get used to the new routine.

(3) Attitude. Students are usually very excited about doing the practicum experience. However, occasionally a student looks at it as unnecessary. This attitude leads only to a negative experience. If you enter the experience sure that you will not learn a thing, you probably will not learn much (nor will you pass the course). A positive, optimistic attitude is a fine habit to cultivate. For the practicum experience, it is essential. Not everything in child care is pleasant and when you are learning and practicing, this attitude will take you a long way towards a successful experience.

PLACEMENT SITES FOR THE PRACTICUM

Where are the Sites and How are They Chosen?

The placement sites which are used are chosen on the basis of three major factors. First is quality of care. While all programs are licensed by DEEC, it is also important that you experience what good child care can be like. But, not all centers are perfect, of course. As a matter of fact, the Department is interested in realistic child care as well as quality child care. Faculty supervisors are experienced professionals in the field, also, and realize that the world of child care operates in a larger, more complex world with political, economic, and social forces influencing it. These forces do not allow for the kinds of quality which we would like to see in every center, every day. However, we strive to have you placed in programs which are doing the best care under the most realistic circumstances. The seminar is used to talk about some of these realistic situations so that you can learn how to deal with these as you move into paid employment.

Secondly, the placement is based on geographic location. Faculty supervisors are limited in time just as you are. We try to find sites which are in a convenient location, especially close to Bunker Hill. Sometimes it is possible to use a locale close to your home. We also must have center locations which are accessible by T or bus for the convenience of both students and faculty members. However, the

supervising faculty member must do many visits to centers over the semester so location is an important factor for all involved.

Third, the placement is based on experience with the center. We have been using some programs for a number of years as practicum sites. These programs share our values as a training program and work well with our students. We add new programs regularly and are open to working with any quality center in the area.

The number of placement sites needed each semester varies enormously. This is highly dependent on the fact that many students are already working in child care and will use an employee site for their practicum experience. Some semesters we use very few student-only sites; other semesters, we use only these. Employee sites must agree to meet all the same requirements for supervision of the student and to allow the faculty visits, so there is little difference between these two kinds of sites other than the fact that the student has already gotten paid employment prior to enrolling in the practicum.

Placements are only done in center-based programs. Age groups of children can vary. However, when a student is employed in a family day care home or system, a plan for accommodating the student for placement in this care system will be discussed individually with the student during the semester prior to beginning the practicum. A written alternative for supervision at the site will be developed by the faculty supervisor prior to the beginning of placement by the student.

When am I Notified of My Site Placement?

If you do not have an employee site, you will be expected to meet with potential sites provided for you, but this must be done as early as possible to assure a placement site. By the first day of the fall semester, a site must be secured.

Every effort is made to make a good match with the student, attempting to assure that a good supervisory fit will occur. Be assured that your needs will be met and the experience will be positive. But, you must be active in finding a site location that meets with the Department's approval.

Pre-practicum Interviews

Prior to placement, the student is given the name of the center and its director, or other contact person. The faculty supervisor has cleared potential places prior to matching specific students with

specific centers and making assignments. The student contacts this person for a personal interview to discuss the possibilities of placement in the center. (See appendix for sample form).

The center and its director or representative has the right to deny a student placement in the center. This may be due to any number of reasons. Some of these may have to do with the student, but often denial for placement after initial agreement with the faculty supervisor occurs because of staffing changes at the center or other center upheavals (director leaving, funding difficulties, etc.). Students need not feel upset or rejected if this occurs. The procedures for finding an alternative placement are begun immediately and the student's needs will be met quickly and appropriately.

Differences between Employee and Student-Only Sites

As mentioned above, the differences between these two kinds of sites are minimal. The college asks that employee sites be of quality, be convenient geographically, and be willing to work with the college in providing a quality experience. Centers must fill out all the same paper work and supervise the student appropriately. Faculty visits are done as in student-only centers.

One difference does exist around student evaluation in employee sites. This involves evaluation. Due to the employer/employee relationship and the colleges hesitancy to interfere in this relationship, the student's supervisor at the work site (also the employment supervisor) is expected to be regularly supervising the student based on employment expectations. These are often different from the expectations for beginning students. For this reason, a midterm conference report is to be filed with the faculty supervisor during the semester, but other employee supervision activities are not reported to the college. This practice aids in avoiding conflicts between the expectations of the faculty supervisor and the employer. Students who are employees must first meet all their employer's requirements, of course, but, also the practicum requirements. In contrast, those in a student-only site must meet the practicum requirements while being careful to follow all the center's rules. In cases of poor or negligent practice in employee sites, a conference will be held with the student to discuss possible changes.

Center Supervisory Responsibility

The center is required to provide a supervisor for the student to help the student understand the role of the teacher in the classroom, the activities which occur each day, and other workings of the center. This role is in addition to the other duties of the staff member so it is limited in its scope. In no way is the center supervisor to become the exclusive mentor to the student. While the student is learning in the work site with the help of the supervisor and all others at the center, the student is solely responsible for his/her behavior and practice.

The center supervisor is asked to be in contact with the faculty supervisor during observational visits for informal interchanges as to the progress being made by the student. Additionally, the center supervisor is asked to contact the faculty supervisor if the student has been absent for more than several days, has been absent for any period of time without making contact to the center, or is performing in the center and classroom in any way that is deemed inappropriate.

The center supervisor is required to participate in a midterm conference with the student. Information from this conference is passed on to the faculty supervisor. This report is then used by the faculty supervisor to develop plans with the student for the final practicum experience with specifics such as to the student's strengths in the classroom, areas of concern which need more practice, and specific next steps for the student.

GETTING STARTED IN PRACTICUM I (ECE 120)

Work Schedules and Supervisory Consent

At the pre-practicum interview it will determine if the placement is acceptable both to the student and the center director. At this time, the student will have the center director or a representative complete the "Student Practicum Work Schedule and Work Supervisor" Form. (See appendix for a sample form). This sets the specific hours which the student will be expected to work and the name of the person who will be supervising the student.

It is up to the student and the center staff to agree to a schedule which will allow the student the maximum work experience over the two semester practicum experience (approximately 25 weeks). Flexibility of hours can be built into the schedule and may have to be

changed due to changes in the student's or center's needs. However, to assure continuity of care, the schedule needs to be set down in writing and agreed to by both parties and then kept with a minimum number of changes over the two practicum periods. Students should complete about 12 hours per week so as to complete the 300 hours over two semesters as required by DEEC for certification. Hours used for program planning and special training events planned by the center in which the student might be allowed to participate can be counted as a part of the student's scheduled hours. Both of these activities are seen as an appropriate use of work time and are a part of the student's commitment to the center's overall workings.

Students are to keep their work hours on the "Student Practicum Log Form" which is turned in during each seminar along with journal entries for the biweekly period. (See appendix for these sample forms). These hours are kept by the student on an honor system. Students are expected to be honest about their work hours and do not need supervisory verification for their work time. If evidence develops which indicates that a student is unable to handle this logging with integrity, the faculty supervisor, with aid from the placement site, will develop an alternative method for the student's logging.

Classroom Expectations

During the classroom experiences in the practicum, the student is considered to be an entry level employee and is to participate in the routines which are set down naturally by the center in the care of children in that center. Special changes are not required of the center to accommodate the college or the student.

Participation in the practicum experience is seen as a growing process over the two semesters. The student will gain skill and knowledge in several kinds of activities. These will include observing children, teachers, and staff; recording children's behaviors; readying the environment and materials for program use; participating in planning and implementing curriculum activities; writing a daily plan; and working directly with children and their families.

General competencies in working with children are provided as a guideline only (see appendix for these standards) and are not to be considered the "be all and end all" of the experience. The student should progress in knowledge, training and skill development with a positive attitude and an understanding of the child care profession as a

future career throughout the practicum experiences. Because students differ greatly in their prior experiences with children, practicum experiences will be developed around individual student needs and interests rather than having all students do the same "activity" each week in all centers.

Student Feelings

Students often have a mix of feelings during the practicum experience. The primary feelings are three.

The first of these is excitement. This is due to the feeling that you have finally arrived at the end point. You actually get to try out the ideas you have been talking about so long in class. And you get to work with real children. That is exciting.

The second feeling is fear. So you now get to work with real children. Maybe you won't do it right. Maybe they won't like you. Maybe you won't like them. Lots of things can go wrong and you probably won't know how to do anything. What if the center staff doesn't pay attention to you? All these fears, any many others, are based primarily on irrational thinking. Most of these never really occur. The children like everyone who cares for them and meets their needs. The staff is interested in having you help them with the care and education of the children in the class. And, while the staff will be very busy, they will welcome you as they would any other staff person in the center. So, while fear is normal to feel, don't allow yourself to get too anxious.

The third feeling is ambivalence. You will be excited and fearful at the same time. And, you will be unsure as to your role in the classroom. The student role is a strange place to be in child care. You are a teacher, but you are not really one yet. You know a lot from your classes, sometimes more than the staff supervising you, but you are not with any authority to act decisively yet. This causes feeling of uncertainty. What is your role and how do you play it out? Remember, your role is of an entry level employee. You are starting at the center just as if it were a job. You have three primary duties: figure out how the center works with its children and follow their lead; fit into the routines and model after the staff as they work with the children; and reflect on your skills and feelings and ask questions so that you can grow and develop in your role as a teacher.

Fitting in with Your Center and Teaching Team

Every center is a little different in its routines and procedures in caring for the children. One of your first duties is to understand the policies of the program. During your initial week at the center, get a copy of the parent and/or employee handbooks which explains to families the expectations for care at the center. Read this thoroughly so that you know what is expected.

Learn the classroom schedule early in your experience. Don't just focus on what happens when you are there, but figure out how the whole day goes, so that you can understand the concept of quality care and how it is carried out.

Next, talk to your supervising teacher every day. Ask lots of questions and get as much information about the classroom, the activity plans, and the children as you possibly can. This will help you feel a part of the program and a member of the team. It will help the program see you as interested and involved.

Finally, take the initiative. Do not wait to be told what to do. In child care, the activity and work is so fast and furious that if you wait to be asked or told what to do, you may never become a part. Many of the routine things are there to be done and you need to observe and do them without hesitation. If you feel uncomfortable or aren't sure if you should, just step up and say, "Why don't I put the cups and snack stuff out? Won't that help?" Most programs welcome this approach and will encourage you to do more.

Seminar Plans

The seminar meets biweekly to discuss the activities which have been going on in the center. This is done as a group and the students in your section will share the workings of their centers so that you can get a broad idea of what is happening in many different sites.

The seminar discussion is a confidential, professional set of activities. We will talk about classroom activity, children, and sometimes personnel activities. These are topics, along with others, which help you to understand most how child care works and what might be going on in the program. We will do a lot of reflection on your skill in dealing with the demands of the practicum and how you are feeling about the job and yourself. Because often these feelings and information are private, as professionals we will be responsible for keeping the information discussed in the seminar confidential.

WEEK-TO-WEEK WORK AT THE CENTER

The Emergent Curriculum and Individual Needs

Because the programs in which you are practicing are so very different, and because student skills and interest are highly varied at the end of the degree program, the curriculum in the practicum experience is emergent in nature. This means that the practicum does not have a set week-by-week child curriculum expectation to be fulfilled, but this is set down as we go, based on individual student needs and center workings. For example, one student is just beginning to have a first-time experience with children. Another, who is an employee in child care and working at an employee site, has had many experiences with children and understands them more thoroughly. The demands of the practicum would be structured differently for each of these students. These expectations are set down in the seminar sessions as well as during individual conferences with students. A syllabus is developed and is given to the center supervisor so that he/she might work directly with the student on assignments. Students work on showing competency in several areas and documenting this competence through a series of portfolio items collected and turned in at the end of the practicum experience.

Activities in the Classroom

During your weeks in the center, you will be doing a number of activities with the children. The first of these will involve routines: the daily activities of eating, sleeping and toileting, as well as arrival and departure routines. You can fit into these immediately. Clean up and supervision is often an important part of each of these activities. Figure out who does what and when and begin to take part.

One restriction to your activity in the classroom is the possibility that you might be asked to supervise children by yourself. This is not allowed by DEEC since you are a student, not a teacher, and you must not be assigned any activity which requires you to be alone with children. This restriction not only protects you since you are just learning, but also protects the children. Remember it and insist that the center follow this if they forget and ask you to do supervision of children alone. (Of course, employed students are exempt from this restriction).

Other activities will involve curriculum activities in planning, implementing and evaluating activities for the children. After the first few weeks of observing and working with more routine activity, you should begin to do some of the planning and implementation of the activities for children. First, see if you can be a part of the activity planning process with the teaching team. Second, begin to volunteer to do some of the work, yourself. The activities which might be available to you would include curriculum guides in art, drama, music and movement, story circles, language arts (speaking, listening, pre-reading, pre-writing), blocks, manipulatives, math and science activity. (See appendix for a sample curriculum guide form). By the end of the first semester, you should be carrying out several of these a week. The planning can be done as a team, but you should feel comfortable in setting up the activity and supervising it for the children.

During your weekly activities you are asked to keep a journal of what has been going on in the center. A form is provided for your summary of the journal writing (see appendix). This material is turned in biweekly at the seminar for the faculty supervisor to read so that a complete account can be kept on your activities in the center.

Supervisory Visits

Your faculty supervisor will visit your program several times during the semesters you are in the practicum site. The first visit will occur within the first month after placement. This visit will orient the faculty member to your placement site and classroom. An observation will be done in writing and given to you for discussion and written feedback after the visit. (See appendix for sample form). The second visit occurs during the second month and focuses on the program activities and your involvement with the children and the activities. The third and fourth visit are done to further inform the supervisor of the program activity areas in which you are involved and to complete an informal conference to set up goals for the final practicum. The next visits focus on the carrying out of these goals and are followed by the final evaluation activity.

Follow-up Conferences and Seminar Discussions

Following each of the faculty visits and during the seminars, the student is given a written evaluation of the visit including questions and guides for next steps. These are discussed thoroughly and the

student provides the faculty supervisor with written feedback. Progress is expected and is considered during future visits. Students are expected to be an active part of the conference conversations and to add reflective information about their role in the center and its activities through the written feedback procedure.

Mid Practicum Evaluations

As outlined above, the faculty and center supervisor provide feedback to the student at the end of the first semester to discuss plans for plans during the final practicum experience. These are informal discussions and should not be intimidating to the student. The students are asked to contribute by reflecting on their strengths in the classroom, the areas in which they feel comfortable, and the places where they wish to accomplish more. An evaluative summary is written by the center and the faculty supervisor along with a midterm checklist of student skills. (See appendix for sample forms).

FINAL PRACTICUM II EXPECTATIONS (ECE 121)

Placement Continuations....Why the Same Place?

Placements are continued in the second semester at the same center site, if at all possible. This is useful for two reasons. First, it takes a student several weeks to get oriented to the placement site and moving to a new one will only require that this adjustment be done all over again. The loss of time would take away from other more important learning opportunities.

Secondly, when a student stays in a placement for the second semester, it allows the student to delve more deeply into the workings of the center and to understand the children and staff in greater depth. This is most beneficial to the student in moving towards paid employment.

Sometimes students desire to work in a different age group within the same center. If this is desired by the student, acceptable to the center, and approved by the faculty supervisor, the change may begin after the hours are completed for the first practicum (150 hours).

Field Based Competencies

During the final semester the general competencies used in the beginning of the practicum experiences will be expanded to include

field based competencies with specific applications for these areas of work. (See sample syllabus for competencies). The competencies and their applications are included in the appendix. They include child development principles; program planning and curriculum development; program implementation and classroom management; program administration; family and community relations; cultural pluralism; children with exceptional needs; assessment of children; evaluation of program effectiveness; and professional behavior. The student is not expected to be thoroughly competent in all areas, but to have a beginning working knowledge and skill development in a majority of these areas. Those persons with more initial experience and in an employee site practicum experience will be expected to have more skill development in more areas than those who are beginners.

Teacher Roles

A second area of exploration will be the area of teacher roles. Using a number of materials provided by the faculty supervisor, the student will analyze the center for its emphasis on teacher roles. Additionally, the student will reflect on his/her own areas of interest in teaching duties and analyze the roles in which there is expertise already. Specific teacher roles to be examined will include the teacher as stage manager, mediator, player, scribe, communicator, assessor, and planner.

Reflections on Yourself as a Teacher

A third area of development at the end of the final practicum involves the student's reflections on oneself as a teacher. The entire practicum experience will be examined and discussed to determine what has been learned by the student, what others know about the student's skills, and what is still to be discovered.

Final Evaluations and Conferences

A final evaluation will be held with the faculty supervisor to assess the learning experience of each individual student. The faculty member and the student will both do evaluations and discuss the learning and growth of the student throughout both practicum experiences. (See appendix for sample forms). The completed portfolio, evidencing competency in all areas, will be due at this time. In addition, other areas of evaluation will include communication skills, self confidence,

understanding of children, understanding oneself, respect for others, professional development, formulation of a philosophy of learning, use of supervision and team membership, understanding of the "big picture", clarity of goals, responsibility and dependability, resourcefulness and independence.

DEEC Application for Certification

During the final conference, the faculty supervisor will provide application materials for teacher certification by DEEC for the student to complete and file. A copy of this application is included in the appendix of this guide.

Student Evaluation of Field Work Experience

During the final seminar meeting and conference time, the student will be asked to complete a critique of the practicum experience, for the Department and the college's Office of Academic Affairs. These are used to assure that the experience is meeting the needs of the students and the program.

NEXT STEPS

Graduation

Graduation should follow the semester of or very shortly after the completion of the practicum experience. Sometimes students must complete a final semester of work following the practicum experiences, but there is rarely a reason for doing more than one semester if the practicum is taken as prescribed. Applications for graduation are done through the Enrollment Services and Academic Records Offices in the Department of Student Affairs. Graduation applications are done in February for students in the spring or in October for those graduating in December.

Transcripts and Transfer Applications

Students will need official transcripts from the Department of Academic Records for their application to DEEC for teacher certification. A nominal fee and short form is filed for the transcript. The process takes a few days so plan ahead.

Transcripts are also needed for those who wish to transfer credit to another four-year college for further academic work. Students may discuss transfer with their faculty supervisor or other members of the

Department or college, particularly the Department of Career Services.

Several colleges, particularly those private colleges in the area specializing in education, have been very interested in working with our students in transfer. After discussing your interests with your faculty supervisor, make an appointment at one or two colleges and discuss the process with the transfer officer at these universities. The faculty supervisor is available to help you with this process. Just ask for help.

Resumes and Work

Whether you are transferring or not, a good, impressive resume will help you in the future to secure employment. The Department of Career Services helps students to do professional resumes. All students should take advantage of this service. This is especially useful to those who are looking for work in the field after completing practicum assignments. The practicum experience and all other work experience, even that which did not have to do with children, should be included on the resume. A completed resume is required for each portfolio.

Jobs in child care are plentiful. Jobs are often posted on the Department bulletin board, the career services bulletin board, or in the Sunday paper of the local news. Some of the state's Resource and Referral (R&R) programs also keep a job bank. The local area R & Rs are the Child Care Resource Center in Cambridge and Child Care Choices of Boston. The other good source of job availability is the center in which you do your practicum. Students are often hired for full-time jobs or for other activities (substitutes, floater positions, etc.) by their practicum centers. Ask the director and your supervising teacher for job possibilities or for contacts at other centers.

Professional Associations

During the final practicum, discussion will also center on professionalism in the field and your involvement in this set of activities. The Boston area has a very active and involved early childhood community providing many experiences in education and advocacy. The local professional organization, the Boston Association for the Education of Young Children (BAEYC), is a good place to start being involved. There are multiple other organizations and sponsored events throughout the year. Joining BAEYC is inexpensive and will put your name on the mailing list for many other activities.

Other Areas of Work to be Explored

Sometimes a student comes to the end of the practicum and feels a need to explore another area of work. The areas involved in early care and education are rich with alternatives beyond direct classroom teaching. While many persons choose to work with children directly in any of the age groups--- infants, toddlers, preschoolers, schoolagers--- or in a variety of settings, others may wish to move on to dealing with families directly in areas of human services or social work. Similarly, educational programs and work with special needs children is a fine alternative to direct care of children. Still, many look to specialized setting for work such as hospital child life programs, resource and referral programs, or other corporate programs with emphasis on early care and education. As you pursue employment and/or further education, remember there are a great many choices as you pursue your career goals in early care and education.

PART TWO:
OF PARTICULAR
INTEREST TO
SUPERVISING TEACHERS

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PRACTICUM SITES

Early childhood development is the study of the growth of the child, the influence of the family upon the child, and the environmental pressures upon the family. The Early Childhood Development Program at Bunker Hill Community College is designed as a comprehensive career program for students interested in working in programs with children and families.

Students must meet both educational and experiential requirements before being certified to work in early childhood settings in the state of Massachusetts. This certification is done by the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC). Students completing A.S. degree programs will be qualified to seek certification as Lead Teachers in programs for young children.

The Student Guide to the Practicum Experience

Part One of this guide provides detailed information for students concerning their practicum experience. The supervising teacher at the center site would be helped by reading over the student portion of this guide so as to become familiar with the student's responsibilities and Department's expectations. In the interest of time, these portions will not be repeated here.

Making Plans to be a Practicum Site

Centers often become practicum sites for a number of reasons. There are three main reasons for this interest. First is a need to contribute to the profession by helping to mentor new professionals in the field. A number of centers have veteran staff who are highly skilled teachers who add greatly to the knowledge base of our new teachers.

A second reason for becoming a practicum site is the connection to the college and its program. Several of our placement sites have a long history with the college and the Department. These programs feel a need to participate collaboratively in the on-going work of the Department. The college benefits, of course, through this collaborative effort, and the center does both through exposure to faculty support and by participating in courses provided through vouchers.

A third reason is more closely connected to center needs. An extra person in the classroom is always a help. A trained person, one

with a lot of educational background in child growth and program planning, is especially helpful. The centers who have been placement sites find our students well trained and enthusiastic, plus well supervised. The combination of these traits provides a fine, extra (and very cost efficient!!) "staff member" to your center for several months each year.

Becoming a practicum site is very easy. After initial contact to the Department, a set of information is sent to you for your review. This material contains information about the program and about the practicum. Included in this is a written agreement which must be signed and returned to the Department chair.

The written agreement delineates the expectations and duties of the college and the center site and staff and is completed prior to student placement.

Program site responsibilities include statements regarding hours of availability and the number of student placements possible, a clarifying statement regarding students as unpaid workers (expect in employment sites), an understanding that students are not used as regular staff members and must not be left alone with children, and a plan for supervision by a Lead Teacher at the practicum site.

College responsibilities include clarification of faculty supervision, student qualifications for enrollment, clarification of procedures for student removal in case of serious problems in the student's performance of duties, and approval for carrying out CORI or other center policies and procedures. (See appendix for sample agreement form).

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PRACTICUM STUDENT

Students for Practicum

The students in the program must meet a number of requirements before being accepted for the practicum experience. These are delineated in the student guide (part one) and will not be repeated here. However, you can expect your student to be in the final stages of the program and well developed in theory and practical knowledge of child care. Students differ considerably in knowledge, skill development, and maturity. Some have had considerable experience in the field. Other have had little. The faculty supervisor will be helpful in giving you further information about each of the students in your site.

Acceptance of Student for Placement

As outlined in the student guide, the student receives the practicum site assignment the first day of the seminar during the first week of the semester. Following this notification, the student calls the center contact and sets up an appointment for a pre-practicum interview. During the interview, the director, or the center's representative, talks with the student about his/her interest in the field, in the practicum, and availability. If the interview goes well and the center director and the student are both satisfied that the match is an appropriate one, the student will have the director sign the consent for supervision form and set up working hours with a time to begin. Students must begin a practicum shortly after acceptance to the center during this interview.

In the unlikely event that there is a problem during the interview, the center director and/or the student will get in contact with the faculty supervisor to either solve the problem or cancel the placement and begin the placement process over for the student.

Student Schedules and Length of Practicum

The student and center staff agree to a schedule which will allow the student the maximum work experience over the semester (approximately 12 weeks). Flexibility of hours can be built in to the schedule, but consistent hours need to be kept for the best practice with the children. Students should complete, at a minimum, 12 hours per week so as to be able to do a set of 150 hours per each semester. All hours must be completed before the end of the semester. Hours used for program planning or other training activities can be counted as a part of the student's work time.

The practicum assignment lasts for two semesters for most students. This would mean that a student coming to your program in mid September would continue until approximately the mid of April (about 7 months due to several week of holiday break time in December and January). The student is instructed to advise you at least two weeks before the practicum hours will be completed so that the center is prepared for the loss of the student in the classroom.

ACTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Working in the Classroom

The student section of this guide details the student's responsibilities in the classroom and will not be repeated here. The student is considered an entry level employee and is to be treated as such. Anything that an entry level employee would be asked to do should be a part of the student's activities, except that students are not allowed by DEEC to be left alone with the children.

Students are expected to be used as members of the teaching staff, not just as clean-up or runners for the center. A list of general competencies is included in the appendix as well as field-based competencies and their application in the classroom. The faculty supervisor is applying these competencies to individual students and developing curriculum for each student based on his/her knowledge of children and skill development in the center.

Students are expected to begin the practicum doing observation of the children and the class routines. After the first couple of weeks of observing, the student is to then begin to participate, first in routine activities, like eating, sleeping, toileting, cleanup, etc., and then in actual activity planning and implementation. The student should end the practicum having participated and/or supervised all the curriculum areas in the classroom. If you have a regular time in which you do planning for class activities, invite your student to participate early on so that he/she might begin to have assigned responsibilities for carrying out some of the activities with the children.

Helping Students Feel Comfortable

The student guide details several of the feelings which students have during the practicum experience. The main feelings involve excitement, fear, and ambivalence about role in the center. It would be helpful for you to read this section of the guide.

The primary role of the center is to help the student feel a part of the teaching team as early as possible. This can happen if the student is encouraged, allowed, and actually given assignments in the classroom. The students are encouraged to take the initiative in doing things which must be done. The child care classroom is a fast and furious ball of energy. Something always needs to be done. Early on, point the student in the direction of what can be done and be pleased

that someone will help you out.

A second role of the center is to answer the student's questions. Just like the children you care for, the student has a lot of questions about why things are done the way they are done. Answer them thoughtfully and with ease. The student is not asking questions to be critical of the center, but to understand how best practice occurs.

Finally, don't be intimidated. The student is often exuberant in his/her new role. Just like a young child, just learning to do an new skill, the student tries very hard to please. Praise, recognition of work, and other positive feedback is very, very important. Sure, we realize that you are busy, but you wouldn't be too busy to give this care to the children, and the adults in the room need it, too.

General Supervisory Responsibilities

Skill level and maturity of students differ greatly. Therefore, the center staff and faculty supervisor will need to collaborate regularly to develop the practicum experience. The faculty supervisor visits the program several times and will make contact to the supervising teacher during these visits. Additionally, the faculty supervisor is meeting with students regularly and giving them assignments. Question the student about these assignments. Finally, contact the faculty supervisor if you have any questions, particularly if a student's behavior is unclear.

A student is expected to behave just as any other employee would act while at the center. Students are instructed to keep their own log sheet of time spent at the center and do not need supervisory verification for this logging. However, if the student is not acting dependably in arriving or departing, is not contacting you concerning absenteeism, or is excessively missing agreed upon hours, doing other activities which are disruptive or inappropriate, please contact the faculty supervisor. This is necessary for adequate supervision and will be greatly appreciated.

Restrictions for Students

The only restriction for students is placed on them by DEEC. **Practicum students are not allowed to be left alone with children,** unless employed by the center. This means that care must be given at all times in the presence of another qualified staff member.

COORDINATING FACULTY AND CENTER SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Bunker Hill Faculty in Seminars and Observations

As outlined earlier, the faculty supervisor meets with students regularly in seminars and after observations for conferences. The student is communicating also through weekly journaling about their experience. Written notes are taken during the observations at the center and provided to students. These deal with the student's activity in the classroom as well as questions about classroom routines and procedures. Student's respond, in writing, to this feedback for continual dialogue.

Center Supervisor in Weekly Meeting to Discuss Work, Include in Planning, and Assigning Activities

Once you have gotten to know your student in the first weeks, you will need to begin to encourage the student to actually participate in classroom planning and activity implementation. It is a good idea to include the student in any planning meetings which occur and to assign particular activities for the student to carry out with the children.

There are three areas which can be a focus for every student. The first of these is taking part in routines. The daily activities involving the eating, sleeping, toileting, cleanup, arrival and departure routines makes a good place for the student to begin participating in the classroom. Give the student a copy of the parent handbook so that they might understand some of the policies surrounding these and other activities. Assign the student areas of the classroom to cover during the routine activities. Suggest certain kinds of activities which they might need to do to help the teaching team.

The second area of focus is the planning of activities. Students often do not understand how activities carried out with the children actually get planned and then implemented. Have the student participate in the planning activities of the center. Have him/her take an idea and develop at least one part for the implementation with the children. Have him/her actually plan an activity and carry it out alone. All of these steps can be done over the course of several weeks. By the beginning of the second practicum, the student should be doing activities regularly in the classroom.

A third area which is helpful to students is a set time to meet with the student, usually weekly, to discuss any questions which he/she

might have about the classroom and its activities. This can be done informally and need not be very long. The student needs the feedback and a sense that his/her contribution in the classroom is helpful. Because the students are usually beginners to the field, they often do not feel that they can judge if they are doing well. Tell them and help them critique their work.

EVALUATING THE STUDENT

Beginning Activities

Students are evaluated in the practicum on a continuum of development beginning from their level of skill on to the end of the practicum time. For those who are just beginning their work with children, the standard starts with observing children and beginning to work with routines. For those who are more skilled, or even employed at the practicum site, the standard for activity is more difficult. While the supervising teacher at the center does not do formal evaluation, the first impressions are important to the faculty supervisor and these should be conveyed either by phone or at the first observational visit.

Midterm Conferences and Plans for Practicum II

Once the student has been in the site for several weeks and has begun to do both routine and classroom activities, you should begin to feel comfortable with the level of skill the student has. This set of activities will lead to a midterm conference at the end of the first practicum.

During the midterm conference, you will be asked to sit with the student and any other person from the center which you would like to involve, to informally discuss with the student's his/her progress. The topics for the conference will include a view of the strengths which the student came with, the areas where more work is needed, and a plan for the second practicum's work. The faculty supervisor will be doing a short feedback form once your information is received. During this time, the faculty member will be meeting with the student, also, to set goals for the final semester (see appendix for form).

Faculty Supervisory Visits

The faculty member keeps a very close connection to students in practicum sites. As has been detailed in the previous guide, several

visits are made to observe the classroom and the student's interaction in the class. During these visits the faculty member makes notes to give to the student about the class and how it is working, how the student is fitting in to the activities, and general impressions for discussion at the conference and seminar.

Supervising teachers are often intimidated by the faculty visit. This is completely unnecessary. The faculty members are professional and have had experience with the ups and downs of child care days. They realize that children can misbehave, do not always do as they are expected, and that teachers can have a bad day. Don't do anything special for the day's visit. Go about your routine as you normally would. The faculty member will follow the class wherever they might be going and the observation of the student will be acceptable, regardless of child behaviors. The primary idea is to see how the student (and the center staff) cope with life in child care, not that it is all perfect. It is most important for our students to understand the realistic issues with which you must cope daily so that they learn to model and do this well.

Final Evaluations

The student is evaluated at the end of the second practicum and given a grade of either "P" (pass) or "F" (fail). This grade is not dependent on a complete set of activity which everyone must do, but is considered on an individual growth basis from the beginning of the practicum. The supervising teacher is not required to do anything to finally evaluate the student. The ongoing information which you provide to the faculty supervisor and the midterm conference materials serve as a basis of your views. For this reason it is important that you keep in touch with the faculty member and report any concerns you have immediately. Particularly if the student is not performing appropriately, call the faculty member as soon as possible. Students are encouraged to ask supervisors to write references for future job searches. These are not required, but are helpful if the center supervisor wishes to aid the student.

Employee Practicum Evaluations--Why Different Expectation?

Those students who are in employee-sites are already under a set of standards developed for employment by their employer. Because of this, the student is to perform beyond these normal expectations and do

more than the usual everyday work. All students complete a portfolio of their experiences (see student syllabus in appendix). A plan for portfolio development is determined with the faculty supervisor and includes a case study of a child in the class, a center or classroom analysis, or professional activities highlighting an area of study which the student wishes to explore. The evaluative procedures for employee-students remains the same as others with this additional expectation added.

BHCC'S APPRECIATION OF CENTER INVOLVEMENT

Course Vouchers

Because we value your activity with the college, as a way of showing our appreciation to the center, the college will provide one course voucher for each student that the center supervises in the practicum experience. This voucher entitles the center to send one person to enroll in any course offered at BHCC. The voucher covers all costs associated with one, three (3) credit course.

The course vouchers are submitted to the administrative offices at BHCC for approval during the early part of the summer for those programs which have served as placement sites during the last academic year. The vouchers are mailed to the center, usually by late June, and are valid for any courses offered during the fall and spring semester of the next academic year. Vouchers are not replaceable and cannot be reissued if lost. Instructions for use accompany the mailing. Questions about the vouchers can be directed to the Department chair.

Continuing Activity as a Practicum Site

The center is welcome to continue its activity as a practicum site after the initial supervision is complete. The college has varying needs for practicum sites, so the continuation of a center role depends completely on the number of students that we have needing sites. Sometimes we need many sites; other semesters, particularly if we have a number of employee students, we need only a few. The faculty supervisor will be in touch with you shortly before the semester begins to arrange for placements if these are needed.

The Department is grateful to the centers in the area for their help in training students. It is not possible to give students a realistic view of quality care without this connection and the centers of the area are most appreciated.

APPENDIX

- A. Department Application for Practicum Enrollment
- B. Sample Permission to Enroll in Practicum Letter
- C. Permission to Enroll Form for Enrollment Services
- D. Practicum Placement Site Assignment
- E. Work Schedules and Supervisory Consent Form
- F. Journal Summary Form
- G. Logging Hours Form
- H. General Child Care Worker Competencies
- I. Curriculum Guide Form
- J. Faculty Observation Form and Student Response Form
- K. Midterm Conference Form & Midterm Evaluation Form
- L. Field Based Competencies
- M. Final Evaluation Form
- N. Department of Early Education and Care Certification Application
- O. Student Evaluation of Field Work Form
- P. Center Agreement as Practicum Site
- Q. Sample Student Syllabus
- R. Policy and Procedures for Re-Admission to Practicum

[NOTE: THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN MATERIALS AND FORMS WHICH ARE USED WITH STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICUM AND SEMINAR CLASSES. THESE FORMS ARE PROVIDED HERE "FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY." THESE ARE NOT TO BE FILLED OUT OR TURNED IN FOR USE BY STUDENTS, SUPERVISORS, OR FACULTY. IF YOU DESIRE HELP IN COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS OR OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES DIRECTED BY THESE FORMS, CONTACT THE FACULTY SUPERVISOR FOR ASSISTANCE.]