

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE
POLICIES & PROCEDURES
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATOR PREPARATION
2026-2027

Office of Field Experience Team

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FIELD EXPERIENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATOR PREPARATION

At National Louis University, our programs in UG Educator Preparation incorporate a substantial amount of fieldwork. We believe that educators learn best by doing—so we prioritize your opportunities to be in the field working with students. Throughout your field experiences, you will have the support of your Mentor Teacher, NLU Faculty, Teacher Development Coach (formally Field Coach) for Practicum and Student Teaching, and Field Specialist.

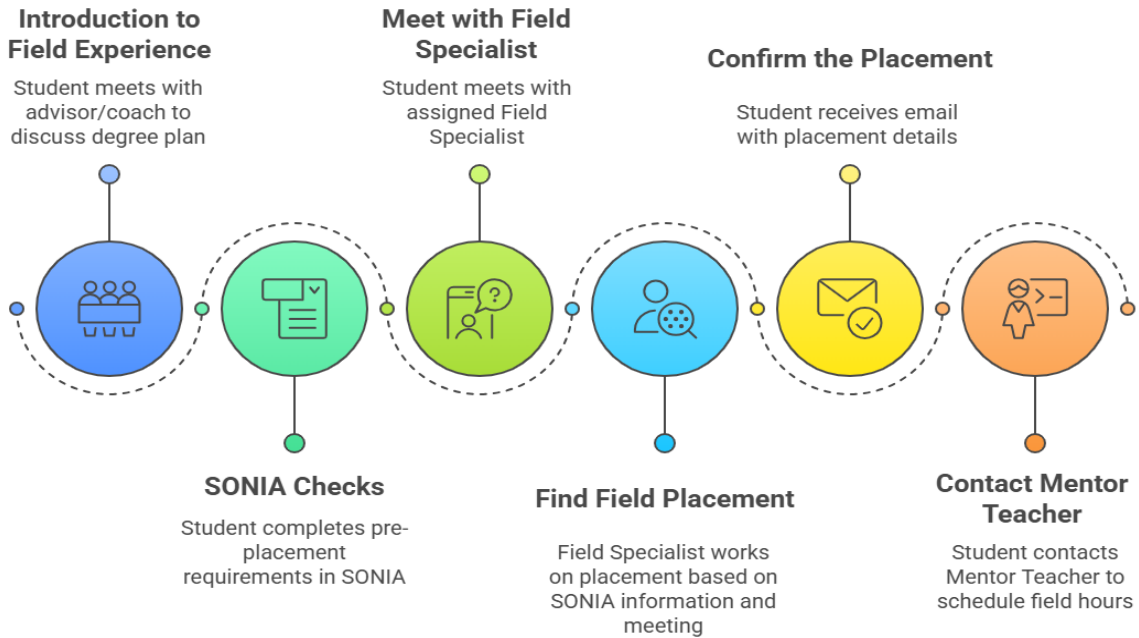
Field experience is the time a teacher candidate spends in a classroom, working with the general education, special education, and/or ESL/bilingual populations (depending on the needs of the coursework). These experiences are practice based, ensuring that the candidate learns by doing, under the guidance of a Mentor Teacher, Teacher Development Coach (during senior year), and course instructor. Working with their team, students build knowledge and improve their teaching skills while working on high leverage practices that impact student learning as well as their own confidence and performance as a beginning teacher.

Field hours can be completed at a variety of different educational sites:

- Public, Charter, or Private School
- Head Start or Early Head Start
- Community-Based or Family Child Care Programs

OFE Placement Process

Field Experience Placement Process



Roles and Responsibilities of the Field Experience Specialist

The Field Experience team will work with students to do the following:

- Complete the NLU Field Placement Application process and secure the appropriate documentation
- Decide upon the best field experience placement based on major and concentration
- Contact sites to request the field placements and confirm the field placements
- Navigate through any additional processes required for the district in which the student is being placed (i.e., additional background check, TB test/physical, etc.)

Securing a Field Placement:

- OFE arranges all field placements, including Field Hours, Practicum & Student Teaching placements

- Students should provide preference information when they coordinate with their Field Specialist
- **Students may not reach out to schools on their own** but rather should collaborate with their Field Specialist on placement preferences or connections they may have at specific sites
- A district may request additional documentation or paperwork (ex., resume) to ensure the student's ability to participate in field experience
- OFE will submit one request at a time for each student
- If a placement request is denied, OFE will make as many successive attempts as necessary on behalf of the student to secure a placement

The OFE will facilitate one placement per term, per student. Although we try to place as close to your home/work as possible, placements can be up to 30 miles or 30 minutes away (as noted in the SONIA portal).

Endorsement and/or program changes made after the NLU Office of Field Experience submits placement requests may result in the student's placement and related field coursework being deferred to a future quarter.

Working at an Educational Site:

Many times, students can complete their field hours at their place of employment if they are currently working in the field of education. The Office of Field Experience (OFE) team will work with students to place them where they work whenever possible, as long as the field based course requirements can be fulfilled and the place of work agrees to the placement. Sometimes, this isn't possible, but the team will communicate with students throughout the entire process. For seniors in the non-licensure degree program, field placement hours can most likely be completed where one works if it is an appropriate environment with young children (i.e., child care, family child care). It is important that you communicate your field experience site preferences with your Field Specialist.

Linked Placement for Licensure Students:

For licensure students, the last two terms are a linked placement. Students are required to participate two full days per week for Practicum and five full days per week for Student Teaching. Students need to make provisions for these requirements in their personal and work life.

Requirements for the ECL Program:

It is important to note that students in the Early Childhood and Elementary Education (ECL) program will have more extensive requirements for field hours due to the large span of grades this major covers. Students will be required to complete hours in three different grade bands in order

to earn licensure for both Early Childhood and Elementary Education:

- Pre-K
- Kindergarten – Grade 2
- Grades 3 – 6

Endorsement Courses:

Students may choose to add an endorsement to their major. Students should specify their minor/endorsement in the Field Hours Application. It is critical that students make this decision early on in their program, and notify their advisor and Field Specialist as soon as they decide on an endorsement. The Field Specialist needs time to secure an appropriate placement setting for the endorsement field hour requirements.

EAL Course Requirements:

EAL course field hours need to be completed in a Pre-K setting or above. **EAL field hours cannot be combined with any other courses.** Each course for the endorsement (i.e., EAL 405, 406, 410, 412, and 431) requires 20 hours in an ESL/Bilingual setting. Even if students are not planning to get the endorsement, 20 individual hours are still required per course, as students can apply those courses toward the endorsement in the future. EAL courses can be completed as part of the 20 Practicum days or 50 Student Teaching days, as long as the grade range/setting is appropriate.

Possible placement settings for EAL courses:

- Dual language or bilingual classroom
- ESL classroom
- General classroom with at least 3-5 ELL students

SPE Course Requirements:

SPE field hours cannot be combined with any other courses, as the 10 hours for each course are required for the Special Education endorsement (i.e., SPE 455, 460, 465). SPE courses can be completed as part of the 20 Practicum days or 50 Student Teaching days, as long as the grade range/setting is appropriate.

Fulfilling Field Assignment Requirements:

The expectation is that your field hour requirements are spaced out as evenly as possible among the ten weeks of the term. However, please follow your course syllabus for EAL course hours which correspond to the Module assignments. Additionally, NLU's academic calendar dates for the Spring term do not typically coincide with most school districts' calendars. Many schools end their school year earlier than the end of the Spring term. Therefore, you may need to fit in all of your field hours in less than 10 weeks.

Please note that even though some courses may be able to combine the hours, all assignments must still be completed for all courses needing hours in that term. Therefore, the minimum hours are just that, the minimum. **If additional hours are needed to complete all assignments across all courses, students may need to exceed the minimum requirement.** If you have questions about combining hours, please reach out to your Field Specialist.

Reference [this document](#) for Combining Course hours.

Reference [this document](#) for Field Hours Frequently Asked Questions and Contacts.

Reference [this document](#) for the Summary of Placement Requirements and Assignments.

NLU Field Placement Application Deadlines

Field Experience Deadlines for SONIA “checks”:

The due dates for each starting term are below.

If you are starting field hours in...	Your application deadline is...
Fall Term	March 1st (current students) April 30th (new Spring transfers)
Winter Term	August 15th (current students) September 30th (new Summer transfers)
Spring Term	December 15th (current students) January 15th (new Fall transfers)

If Completing Hours in the Chicago Public School District (CPS District 299):

If you wish to complete field placement in a CPS school, communicate this preference to your Field Specialist as soon as possible. Additionally, if you are working in a CPS school and wish to do your placement hours at that school, please let the OFE staff know so they can communicate your next steps. You will need to go to the [CPS Field Experience and Student Teaching website](#) and follow the instructions to complete the Field Experience Registration. For your Student Teaching, you will need to complete an additional Student Teaching Application. **Please note that if you are employed by CPS as a SECA, it is most likely you will be unable to remain employed while completing your Practicum and Student Teaching terms, and will need to take a leave of absence. Please make sure to plan accordingly.**

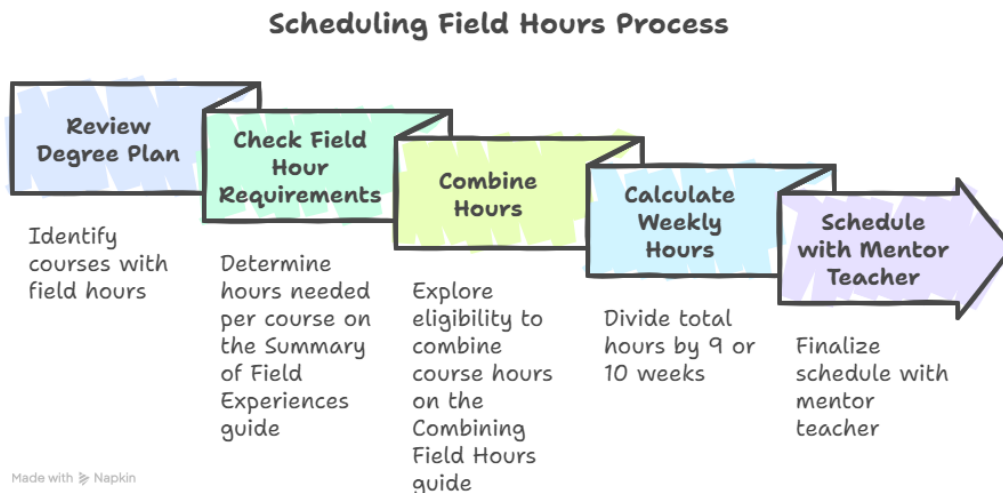
Scheduling Field Hours:

When a field placement is confirmed, the student needs to contact the Mentor Teacher by email no later than two weeks prior to the start of the term. The details of the placement are sent to the student by email and are also available in Sonia.

To schedule the time in the classroom at the placement site (except for the linked placement of Practicum and Student Teaching for licensure students), the student will need to be familiar with the course assignments requiring field hours and their own availability. Field hours need to be completed during the dates of the NLU term.

In the communication to the Mentor Teacher, students can start to schedule the time in the classroom, coordinating with the schedule of the Mentor Teacher. **Field hours are spread out throughout the term.**

Practicum and Student Teaching students complete full days in the classrooms at their field placements, starting when the mentor arrives at the school site and ending when the mentor teacher concludes the school day. Practicum is 20 full days, evenly spread throughout the term. Student Teaching continues in the same classroom for 50 full consecutive days. The start dates for each term vary and may begin before the NLU term, depending on the calendar of the placement site.



Content Test Deadlines and Requirements:

Please review the [Content Test handbook](#) for information regarding the content testing policy and deadlines for the exam. A score of 220 out of 300 must be achieved before starting the linked placement with Practicum field experience. We highly recommend you take the content test early, in case additional attempts are needed!

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATOR OFFICE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE POLICIES

Conflict with Placement Policy

Candidates may not complete field experiences in a site where a close family member, friend, or relative is

attending or professionally employed without formal approval from the University and placement site.

Absences Policy

Candidates may not miss more than 2 days of classroom experience during Student Teaching. If candidates need to miss more than two days due to illness or family emergencies, then additional days equivalent to the days missed will be added to the Student Teaching term.

Practicum and Student Teaching Attendance Policy

Teacher candidates (TCs) are expected to be at their placement school all day and every day that teachers are in attendance, adhering to the agreed upon schedule between the teacher candidate, Mentor Teacher, and school administration. Appropriate arrival and departure times should be discussed with the Mentor Teacher and the Teacher Development Coach.

Teacher candidates who are in full-day Student Teaching are to assume the same responsibility for regular attendance that the Mentor Teacher does, including in-service training, professional development opportunities, field trips, faculty and staff meetings, etc. TCs follow the school calendar rather than the university calendar. If a teacher candidate must be absent from their placement school at any time for illness, religious observances, or serious personal matters, it is their professional responsibility to immediately contact the Mentor Teacher, Teacher Development Coach, and course instructor. Please note that after two days of absence, arrangements to make up missed days must be discussed with the Field Specialist, Mentor Teacher, Teacher Development Coach, and course instructor. Additional absences, vacations, early departures and/or late arrivals for any reason may result in extending, repeating, or failing the Practicum or Student Teaching experience. The Director of Educator Preparation and Field Experience Programs will make the final decision.

Substitute Teaching for Mentor Teacher Policy

Substitute teaching will be limited to no more than 2 days for Practicum and 5 days in the Student Teaching placement classroom while the Mentor Teacher is absent. Approval must be given by the Office of Teacher Development (UGTeacherDevelopment@nl.edu). Student Teachers may substitute only in their agreed-upon classroom and may not be hired for other classrooms or buildings. NLU does not allow substitute teaching as the teacher of record (for example, a long-term substitute teaching position) to be used to fulfill the linked placement experience. In order to substitute teach, students need to have their substitute teaching license or DCFS license at childcare centers.

NLU Teacher of Record Policy in Licensure Programs

NLU recommends that teacher candidates work closely with their Field Specialist to find a field placement for the linked practicum and student teaching placement that allows them to continue gaining experience in a classroom environment that prepares them for the wide variety of ages/grades within an endorsement.

However, because we know that adult learners bring a great deal of prior knowledge and experience to the college classroom, we do allow students to complete their linked practicum/student teaching as the teacher of record at their current place of employment as appropriate and allowable under ISBE rule. Review [this document](#) for the full policy.

Failure to Meet Field Experience Expectations & Field Placement Removal

Teacher candidates who do not meet the expectations of NLU's Professional Dispositions and are removed from a field placement, or are not invited to return by the Mentor Teacher and/or site leadership, will be placed on a Student Success Plan through the Office of Teacher Development. In addition, the candidate will be required to pause enrollment in any courses with field experience requirements for one academic term.

Upon successful completion of the Student Success Plan, the candidate may be granted one additional opportunity to complete the required field experiences at a new placement. **A second removal from a field placement will result in dismissal from the Educator Preparation Program.**

This policy applies to all field-based experiences, including introductory Field Hours courses, Methods courses, Practicum, and Student Teaching.

Sonia

Sonia is a web-based placement management software that helps streamline the process of placing, tracking, and monitoring field placement data. This platform allows students, faculty/staff, supervisors, and Mentor Teachers to access placement records, complete Competency Appraisals, and upload support documentation. This is also where you will access your Placement groups, Checks, and Placement documentation.

Log In:

- Go to <https://sonia.nl.edu>
- Select **Office of Field Experiences: BA & MAT Educator Preparation**
- Bookmark this page, as you will return to it often!
- Choose 'Student' as your Role
- Click the 'University Sign in' button
- Enter your NLU email and password (the same login that you would use to access your NLU portal)



Sonia Checks:

In the Checks tab, you will see all of your placement requirements listed here with directions. You will be asked to upload and submit the following documents within Sonia before starting field hours, as part of your Sonia "Checks." *Please note there are different requirements for the Criminal*

Background Check depending on the type of placement site (i.e., CPS School vs. Non-CPS School).

- Criminal Background Check Verification
- Mandated Reporter Certificate
- OFE Acknowledgment Form
- UG Field Hours Application Form
- D2L Course: Introduction to Field Experience

Office Hours:

Please attend our Office Hours at the days/times below for one-on-one support with Checks, field hours, or timesheets. You can drop in at any time during the hours listed below.

Zoom Link: <https://nl.zoom.us/j/97727538824>

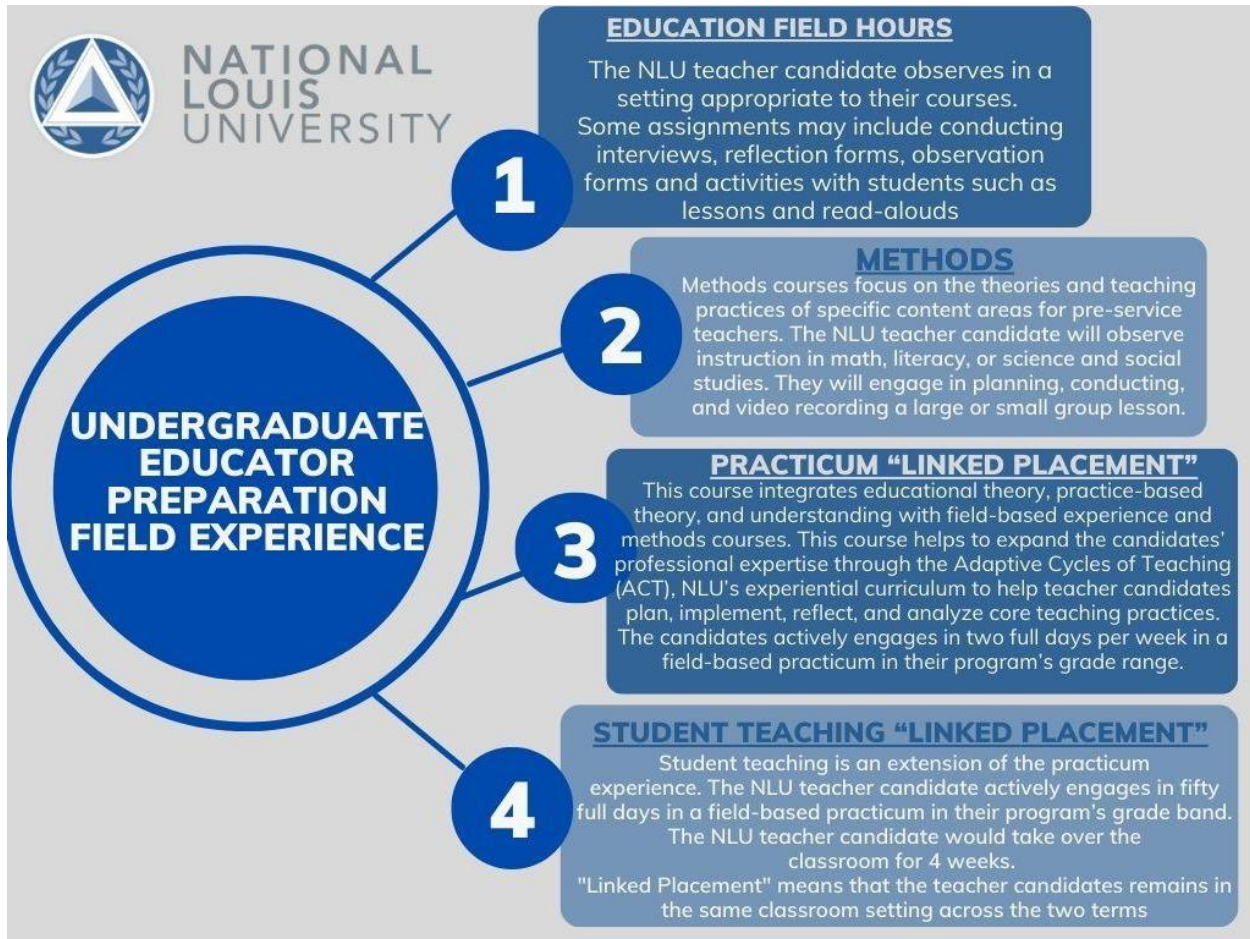
Mondays 12:00-1:00 pm

Tuesdays 3:30- 4:30 pm

Thursdays 12:00-1:00 pm

Licensure Majors

UGC Educator Preparation Coursework in the Field



Student Teaching Experience

The Student Teaching field experience is 50 full consecutive days, which equates to about 5 full days a week for at least 10 weeks. Your Field Specialist will help you to figure out when you need to start your Student Teaching placement, based on your site's calendar. It is important to note that some districts, for example, Chicago Public School District (CPS), have implemented a paid student teaching policy, where students might be able to remain employed during Student Teaching.

However, if you work as a CPS SECA employee, you will most likely need to take a leave of absence in order to complete the Student Teaching requirement. Many suburban districts also require employees to take a leave of absence in order to complete the Student Teaching requirement.

Because every Student Teaching experience is unique, it is difficult to lay out a firm schedule for the TC to assume the lead instructional role. TCs should coordinate a schedule early in the process with their MT that outlines the responsibilities that the TC will assume, which will build up to full classroom planning and instructional duties for a minimum of four weeks. The MT should exercise professional discretion to determine when the TC is ready to assume each additional classroom responsibility, in consultation with the Coach. It is recommended that TCs assume lead instruction one subject at a time, gradually building to the role of lead facilitator for the entire classroom.

It is important to remember that there is no set timeline for this process and that flexibility of both the TC and MT are necessary in order to ensure a quality experience for the TC, the MT, and the students.

NOTE: At no point in the Practicum or Student Teaching experiences should a TC be left alone to supervise students (in person or virtually). The MT should be in the classroom with the TC at all times. This includes small group work.

Expectations for Practicum & Student Teaching ***(Linked Placement)***

Teacher candidates (TC) will complete the following field-related activities during Practicum:

- During the first weeks of Practicum, TC gets to know the children, the Mentor Teacher, and the classroom routines;
- TC takes an active role in the classroom in as many ways as possible;
- TC supports diagnostic assessments;
- TC is required to teach multiple lessons in various subject areas, as appropriate to the age of children in the classroom along with subject matter being taught in the university classroom;
- TC is required to use a problem solving, culturally responsive and respectful process to improve their classroom management.

Teacher candidates will complete the following field-related activities during Student Teaching:

- TC is required to teach multiple lessons in various content areas;
- TC is required to use a problem solving, culturally responsive and respectful process to improve their classroom management;
- TC completes (minimally) a full four-week lead instructional phase within the classroom

Teacher Candidates, Mentors, and Coaches are to consult the [Classroom Activities by Week document](#) for an outline of weekly responsibilities.

Additional Expectations of the Teacher Candidate

Every teacher spends time on administrative work such as copying, grading, cutting, laminating, and putting up displays. TC's can help their MT with these tasks. This work can give the TC a sense of the realities of teaching. However, it is possible to be asked to do too much clerical or a teacher's aide work. That is not the TC's role in the classroom. If the TC feels this is happening, it is a topic for discussion with the Teacher Development Coach and the MT.

Responsibilities of the Teacher Candidate (TC)

- Establish a schedule with the MT for lessons that the TC will be assisting with or teaching, including the recording and submitting of video samples of instruction or arranging for in-person Teacher Development Coach visits;
- Maintain the confidentiality of all student interactions, including instructional videos. Videos should not be shared with anyone outside of NLU and the GoReact platform;
- Ask questions and make every effort to fully understand the curriculum being used at the placement site and in the host classroom;
- Understand and provide all accommodations being provided to the students in the classroom;
- Ask questions about planning and instruction, and make every effort to assist the MT whenever possible.
- Develop and share clear lesson plans with the MT and TDC before implementation with students, and make adjustments as necessary based on feedback provided by the MT and TDC.
- Develop and share effective assessments for student learning with the MT;
- Report all absences to the MT, TDC, and instructor in a timely manner prior to the absence and work with the MT to schedule make up days accordingly;
- Maintain the tenets of culturally responsive teaching in a respectful manner, honoring the culture and background of all children and adults in the setting;
- Explore and utilize resources - visual aids, manipulatives, computer software and websites, etc. that can be used to support student learning;
- Learn how to operate the classroom computer, tablets, smart boards, overhead projector, copy machine, and any other technology in the classroom.
- Read curriculum guides and textbooks for the classroom, as well as books that the students use;
- Attend professional development and building/team meetings;
- Initiate conversations with your MT about what you can or would like to do.

Teacher Development Coaching & Responsibilities of Teacher Development Coach

Students in the linked placement (Practicum/Student Teaching) in the licensure program are paired with a Teacher Development Coach. A Teacher Development Coach is a member of each teacher candidate's support team. Coaches bring a wealth of expertise and teaching experience to their work with candidates. NLU is fortunate to connect students with these resourceful individuals.

The Teacher Development Coach works with the student to create a personalized plan of support that involves feedback on all aspects of teaching. This plan will include in-person observations (virtual for teacher candidates outside of Illinois), meetings with the MT and TC, and phone/Zoom meetings between the TDC and TC to set goals and reflect on progress. The student and their support team will also engage in an assessment process of the TC's performance in the field through a Field Appraisal and a Professional Disposition Assessment.

Responsibilities of the Teacher Development Coach (TDC):

Teacher Candidates will work with a Teacher Development Coach (TDC) during the linked placement. The Teacher Development Coach is a direct link between the TC, the school, and the university. The TDC has three major responsibilities:

- 1. Encourage and facilitate the professional growth of the TC:**
 - a. Help the TC integrate theory and practice and develop self-evaluation skills to become a critically reflective practitioner.
 - b. Observe and confer with the TC and MT to assist in analyzing the teaching/learning process.
- 2. Assess the TC's performance:**
 - a. The TDC plays an important role in assessing the TC. The TDC evaluates the TC holistically in consultation with the TC, the MT, and others when necessary in order to determine the level of proficiency, not just in lesson development but in overall classroom management and dispositional development.
- 3. Serve as liaison between the TCs classroom/school and the Undergraduate (UG) Educator Preparation Department.**
 - a. Collaborate with the TC, the MT, and school administrators;
 - b. Interpret the Student Teaching program and policies in order to serve as a resource person for all school personnel, representing the UG Educator Preparation Department professionally and responsibly;
 - c. Collaborate with the Seminar Instructor to support the success of the TC, communicating regularly to appraise the Seminar Instructor on the TC's progress in the field.

NLU Professional Dispositions

National Louis University is committed to ensuring our teacher candidates have certain intangible and important attributes. In addition to mastering the technical, organizational, and teaching skills necessary for effective teaching, TCs must also demonstrate the following dispositions:

1. **Dependability:** the ability to be relied upon in the professional setting, including maintaining confidentiality
2. **Communication:** the ability to ensure that the intended message is successfully delivered, received, and understood.
3. **Resourcefulness:** the ability and creativity to cope with unexpected challenges.
4. **Cooperation:** working together to achieve results.
5. **Perspective Taking:** the ability to perceive situations from an alternative point of view.
6. **Responsibility:** is doing what you are supposed to do and accepting the results of your actions.
7. **Interaction with Others:** promoting NLU in a positive manner.
8. **Social Equity Mindset:** showing growth over time and experience by understanding the unfairness or injustice in the way people are treated in society.
9. **Ability Mindset:** showing growth over time and experience by understanding diverse learning.

Here is the [link](#) to learn more about the dispositions that will play a significant role in the TC field experience. These disposition requirements are monitored and assessed throughout the teacher preparation program at NLU. They will also be assessed throughout the Student Teaching process.

We expect that teacher candidates from NLU will also project a professional appearance. Therefore, teacher candidates must dress appropriately and professionally during all field experiences. Candidates are expected to follow the professional attire norms set by their field site.

