



# *Information* UPDATE

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Tony Evers, State Superintendent/P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

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**TO:** District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,  
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

**FROM:** Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent  
Division for Learning Support

**SUBJECT:** The Use of Student Teachers and Practicum Students in Public School Speech and  
Language Programs

Recently, a number of issues and questions have been raised concerning a school district's use of college students, specifically student teachers and practicum students, to provide speech and language services to students with disabilities. As a result, we are providing this Information Update Bulletin to address these issues and questions. If you have further questions about this topic, please contact the Special Education Team at 608-266-1781.

## **1. What is student teaching?**

Student teaching, as a part of the professional education program, is classroom practice through observation, participation, and actual teaching under the direct supervision of a cooperating public school teacher and college or university supervisor of student teachers.

## **2. What is a practicum?**

In a public school, a practicum is a directly supervised experience by a Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licensed teacher which provides an introductory experience to enrich the class work of a pre-service student in an approved program.

## **3. Can school districts in Wisconsin provide a learning experience in their speech and language programs for student teachers and practicum students enrolled in an approved university communicative disorders program?**

Yes. DPI licensed speech and language pathologists (SLPs) may offer pre-service speech/language pathology students a learning experience as part of their teacher preparation program.

## **4. What are the legal requirements for an SLP to supervise pre-service students in the public school?**

PI 34.15(6) Wis. Admin. Code, Cooperating Teachers, requires that local school districts shall ensure cooperating teachers utilized in their clinical programs meet all of the following requirements:

- a. Hold a regular Wisconsin teaching license and have volunteered for assignment as a cooperating teacher.
- b. Have at least three years of teaching experience with at least one year of teaching experience in the school system of current employment.
- c. Have completed training in both the supervision of clinical students and in the applicable standards.

**5. How many university students can a licensed SLP in a school district supervise at one time?**

One. The intent of the student teaching or practicum experience for a pre-service student enrolled in a university program is for a one-to-one ratio with a licensed SLP in a teaching situation.

**6. What is meant by direct supervision?**

Direct supervision means regular, onsite, continuing interaction between the licensed SLP and the pre-service student, which includes time to evaluate the services provided. There must be sufficient contact between the licensed SLP and the pre-service student and between the licensed SLP and the public school students to enable the SLP to diagnose educational needs, prescribe teaching and learning procedures, and evaluate the effects of teaching.

The DPI licensed SLP is the person who is directly responsible for the actions of the pre-service student. The legal and ethical responsibility for the public school students' instruction remains with the licensed SLP. The goal of direct supervision is to ensure the quality of practice in the activities offered by the pre-service student.

**7. How much supervision of a student teacher is required from the licensed SLP?**

The licensed SLP must provide direct supervision. This means the licensed SLP must be present and immediately available for direction and supervision during the pre-service student's interaction with children.

**8. How much supervision of a practicum student is required from the licensed SLP?**

The purpose of a practicum is to introduce students to the fieldwork experience and develop a basic level of understanding of the needs of children with speech and language disabilities in a public school. It is not intended to develop independent performance but to enrich class work through directed observation and participation in selected aspects of the teaching process. The practicum student should be directly supervised at all times.

**9. May a school district use student teachers or practicum students as a way to address a shortage of licensed SLPs?**

No. The person providing service to children with disabilities must hold a DPI 820 teaching license. Pre-service students may not assume the duties of a licensed SLP.

**10. If the licensed SLP is absent, may the student teacher or practicum student serve as a substitute?**

No. Pre-service students cannot serve as substitute teachers.

**11. May a student teacher represent the SLP at an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting?**

No. A student teacher cannot represent a DPI licensed SLP on an IEP team. The licensed SLP is responsible for all evaluations and development of the IEP. A student teacher cannot determine the need for service or participate in program planning.

**12. May a practicum student attend an IEP team meeting?**

The practicum student may attend only as an observer and if the parent of the child agrees in writing. Participation in the IEP team meeting would place the practicum student in the position of interpreting findings and program planning. These functions are beyond the role and scope of a practicum student.

**13. If the school district's licensed SLP has a practicum student or student teacher in their program, may the district schedule its delivery of speech and language services around the university's class schedule?**

No. The IEP team is responsible for developing a child's IEP, including determining the amount, frequency, and duration of the special education and related services. Service amount, frequency, and duration decisions must be based on a child's individual and unique needs, and not on factors such as availability of special education and related service, configuration of the service delivery system, or other administrative conveniences.

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**<http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/bulindex.html>**