Evidence and Analysis of the Clinical Teacher Handbook of the EPP for Continuous Improvement:

The West Texas A&M University Clinical Teacher Handbook of the EPP provides each of our candidates with vital information for successful clinical teaching experiences. A review of the handbook encompasses detailed information for the candidates about important topics that span their responsibilities, expectations, and guidelines for effective teaching. Part I of the handbook includes the following topics:

I. During the Candidates’ Assignment. This section outlines additional candidate responsibilities for their Cooperating Teachers (CT), their P-12 students, the principal, and their University Field Supervisors (UFS). These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Being well prepared for teaching and other duties.
2. Preparing lesson plans on schedule and having them approved by the Cooperating Teacher.
3. Returning all resources and equipment that are used to appropriate storage areas.
5. Attending faculty meetings, assemblies, parents’ nights, advisory council meetings, and staff development.
6. Participating in sponsorship of youth organizations and other professional groups for which the Cooperating Teacher has responsibility.
7. Conferring regularly with the Cooperating Teacher about candidate progress and areas of needed growth.
8. Calling the Field Supervisor if and when problems arise.
9. Being available at the appointed time for conferences with the Cooperating Teacher and/or the University Field Supervisor, AND
10. Recognizing and accepting that the Cooperating Teacher has the ultimate responsibility for what candidates may or may not do in the classroom.

II. Mandatory Meetings. During the Student/Clinical Teaching semester, candidates will be required to attend various meetings. These meetings have been specifically developed to meet various needs and to address specific topics that will help them to be successful. The purpose of these seminars is to introduce candidates to various topics relevant to them as teachers and to give candidates the opportunity to reflect with peers on the trials and triumphs they will encounter. Required dress for all of the seminars is Professional.

III. Expectations of Student/Clinical Teachers, Appearance, Actions, and Attitude. During the first days in the classroom, candidates may feel somewhat unsure of how to act. The following information has been gathered from previous Student/Clinical Teachers who have been where candidates are now about to go and from veteran teachers and principals with whom candidates will be working.
1. Appearance - First impressions are extremely important in public schools. Dress like a professional at all times. Observe what the faculty members wear and then dress accordingly. Good grooming is part of the professional image candidates create. If candidates do not look like a teacher, the students will not treat them like one. This aspect becomes more important in the upper grade levels. Candidates’ classroom management will suffer if they not only act like “one of the gang”, but also if they are dressed like one of them.

Part II of the handbook provides detailed information for candidates about Classroom Management, Managing the Emotional Environment, and Managing the Cognitive Environment. As student/clinical teachers, candidates are entering a pre-existing management structure. Candidates are encouraged to communicate regularly with their Cooperating Teacher to learn which type of management structure they are using in their classroom and what their expectations of the candidate will be. Candidates are instructed to learn what roles they will play and then play them. Do not attempt to introduce a different structure during the brief time they have with the class.

In Managing the Emotional Environment, candidates are expected to be motivated, enthusiastic, interested, and well informed about what they are teaching. This is catching. If candidates appear to be bored with the materials or content, the students will be as well. Candidates are encouraged to use humor, creativity, and concern. Never embarrass or humiliate a student. If candidates need to discuss behavior, they may arrange to do it privately. Candidates are encouraged to expect the best from their classes and they will receive it. Attitude is extremely important in the discipline process. Successful managers of classrooms possess these traits:

1. With-it ness - awareness of what is going on and the ability to communicate it.
2. Overlapping - ability to do more than one thing at a time.
3. Smoothness of transitions - no wasted time.
4. Momentum - correct pacing in the lesson.
5. Group alertness - ability to keep students’ attention.
6. Accountability - know what each student is learning.

In Managing the Cognitive Environment, candidates are instructed to provide clear, explicit instruction of expectations before moving their students to activities. Check for understanding to make sure everyone knows what is expected. Start seatwork as a group or under close supervision and provide a model. Keep students actively engaged in all parts of the lesson. This gives students less opportunity or reason to be off-task. Choose nonverbal over verbal communication when redirecting individual off-task behaviors. Monitor the class constantly and redirect inappropriate behaviors prompting. Monitoring tips are included in Part III:

Communication Skills - During Student/Clinical Teaching, candidates are expected to demonstrate proficient communication skills.
2.1.4. Candidate Clinical Teacher Handbook of the EPP, Fall 2015.

Listening - Since so much communication is attempted via the verbal and auditory routines, candidates must be skilled listeners and demonstrate this skill regularly.

Speaking - A voice that is properly used is a vital instrument in the classroom. Vocal dynamics, level and pitch are vehicles for control by conveying all types of emotions. Projection, enunciation, and volume convey instructions clearly if words are properly chosen. A rich vocabulary adds differentiated shades of meaning as well as variety to presentations. Proper grammar is vital in candidates’ positions as role models.

Writing - As in the case of speech, clearly written assignments, exercises, comments, and evaluations facilitate communication to the class and thereby reduce stress. Correct spelling is vital. All prepared written work should be free of spelling errors, and white board work should be screened for troublesome words. Notes to parents are important and should be carefully proofed and edited before being sent home. Correct grammar and command of sentence structure are essential for effective communication.

Reading - Oral reading is a requirement and expressive reading can add immeasurably to the learning experience. Efficient, rapid, silent reading will save candidates time on homework and adds skill in scanning new sources of ideas for the classroom and for personal development.

Involvement - The Student/Clinical Teacher should be gradually introduced into the teaching position until full responsibility is gained. At the end of the assignment, the Student/Clinical Teacher is gradually eased out. A calendar is placed in each Cooperating Teachers’ packet that gives a SUGGESTED timeline for involvement. The Cooperating Teacher can adjust the calendar as necessary, but the Student/Clinical Teacher should have a maximum amount of time to plan and to teach independently.

Observation - Prior to the candidate’s first day, go over the Observation Checklist. These are the things candidates need to be cognizant of during the initial visit. Candidates check in at the assigned building’s office, meet the principal and secretary. Inquire about parking and other visitation policies. Obtain information about the teacher’s assignment; daily schedule; course assignments, textbooks, curriculum, and other responsibilities. Obtain a school calendar. Find out about topics/units/themes to be covered during the time candidates are in the classroom.

In the handbook, Parts IV and V detail the Observation Checklist, Procedures and Policies, The Lesson Plan, Self-Reflection on Instruction, and Teaching the Lesson. The information provided to candidates in these sections provides essential tips for effective and successful teaching and reinforces what candidates have learned in their preparation to be effective teachers.

Part VI delineates Success with Students and Words to the Wise for candidates. Student/Clinical Teaching is considered a full academic load. Additional course work, including online courses will present challenges. Candidates’ student/clinical teaching must take precedence. Employment during Student/Clinical Teaching is NOT
ADVISABLE due to the tremendous time commitment expected for preparation. If financial needs require that some employment be assumed, this should be limited to 10-12 hours per week, preferably on weekends. Weekday afternoons should be free for seminars, faculty meetings, and curriculum planning. Any issues concerning employment during Student/Clinical Teaching should be discussed in advance with candidates’ Field Supervisors.

Instructional materials prepared using supplies provided by the school usually remain with the school at the completion of the Student/Clinical Teaching assignment. If candidates know that they will want to keep some of the instructional materials for their own use, check with the school’s policy and then decide whether they will want to purchase the necessary supplies themselves.

Administering medicine to students IS NOT PERMITTED at any time. Even if the Cooperating Teacher gives candidates the “go ahead,” candidates must decline and cite University policy as the reason for doing so.

Part VII of the handbook highlights important laws for Student/Clinical Teachers including the Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 21.904: Requiring or Coercing Teachers; TEC 21.912 Teacher Liability; TEC 21.201: Suspension of Students; Removal to Alternative Education Programs; and TEC 21.3011: Expulsion of Students.

Part VIII demonstrates Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Student/Clinical Teachers, Intrapersonal Skills, and Effort and Initiative. Part IX outlines Standard 1.8 of the Texas Administrative Code: The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications. Additionally, The TAC establishes enforceable standards governing the conduct of Texas educators toward professional colleagues. These standards include the following:

Standard 2.1 The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personal information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purpose or is required by law.

Standard 2.2 The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

Standard 2.3 The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

Standard 2.4 The educator shall not interfere with a colleague’s exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Standard 2.5 The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, or family status.
Standard 2.6 The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

Standard 2.7 The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the State Board of Educator Certification.

Additionally, in Part IX, the Texas Administrative Code establishes enforceable standards governing the conduct of a Texas educator toward students. These standards include the following:

Standard 3.1. The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purpose or is required by law.

Standard 3.2. The educator shall not knowingly treat a student in a matter that adversely affects the student’s learning, physical health, mental health, or safety.

Standard 3.3. The educator shall not deliberately or knowingly misrepresent fact regarding a student.

Standard 3.4. The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, national origin, religion, or family status.

Standard 3.5. The educator shall not engage in physical mistreatment of a student.

Standard 3.6. The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.

In the handbook, Part X describes essential information for candidates to be successful in their clinical teaching experiences, such as: Attendance, Staff Development, Suspension from the Teacher Education Program, and Incomplete Evaluation Recorded for Student/Clinical Teaching.

For Attendance - Lateness is inexcusable. Candidates are not permitted to leave the school campus during the school day with prior approval. If an emergency arises and candidates must be absent, they are to notify their Cooperating Teacher immediately. (Candidates should have their Cooperating Teacher’s mobile number/home number). Keep calling until contact is made with the Supervising Teacher. Telephone the school secretary before school begins with the following information: Candidate’s Name; Cooperating Teacher’s name; reason for absence; and the date expected to return for Student/Clinical Teaching. The Cooperating Teacher may include additional information or make other arrangements. Notify the Field Supervisor of any absences so that s/he will not make an unnecessary trip to the school. Excessive absences may result in: 1) an “Incomplete” being assigned for the candidate’s Student/Clinical Teaching experience; 2) Being ineligible for graduation or certification until the assignment is completed satisfactorily; or 3) being terminated from the Student/Clinical Teaching experience. A
“day off” because a candidate has not missed any days is unacceptable and unprofessional, resulting in a possible immediate termination of Student/Clinical Teaching. Candidates should provide lesson plans for the Cooperating Teacher if they are responsible for the class that day of absence.

During Student/Clinical Teaching, candidates are expected to be at their assigned school on staff development days to participate in any professional development programs when appropriate. Whenever the Cooperating Teacher is on duty, so is the candidate assigned to them!

Suspension from the Teacher Education Program. Whenever the Head of the Department of Education has reason to believe that grounds exist for the dismissal of a candidate from the teacher education program based upon personal conduct and has the opinion that the immediate suspension of the candidate is necessary in the best interests of the teacher education program, the public schools or public school students, the Head of the Department of Education may suspend the student immediately from the teacher education program, including field experiences in the public schools. The process for dismissal of a candidate from the teacher education program will be initiated as soon as possible following the suspension of the candidate. To the extent possible, candidates reinstated after suspension will be restored to their previous position and status without action detrimental to their studies, progress, and evaluation of their work.

Incomplete Evaluation Recorded for Student/Clinical Teaching. Whenever it is determined that an incomplete grade is appropriate, the candidate (student/clinical teacher) may be asked to extend the current assignment or be reassigned in another classroom. No longer than one year following the date the incomplete was recoded, a grade of pass or fail will be recorded.

A review of the Student/Clinical Teaching Handbook is an ongoing process of continuous improvement involving the Director of Teacher Preparation and Advising, the Department Head, our school partners of cooperating teachers, principals, EPP Advisory Council members, candidates, and faculty.

Evidence Source: