

EDUC 430: Community Field Experience (1)

Course Description and Rationale

Following the extended practicum, the 3-week community field experience provides all teacher candidates with an alternate experience to broaden their concept of educational spaces and opportunities.

Teacher candidates who supplement their certification-qualifying, local practica with experiences in alternate settings are likely to broaden their understanding of formal education and enhance their educational skills and philosophies. This perspective prompted Anderson, Lawson and Mayer-Smith (2007) to pilot a study based on the following concern:

... that practicum experiences offered in school-based settings were not in keeping with broader definitions of teacher education. Teacher education in our view is about equipping educators with a wide range of skills that can be readily transferable across contexts, inside and outside of school settings. It should provide pre-service teachers exposure to and opportunities to practise in a wide array of learning environments. (p. 342)

From their research on teacher candidates who finished their practica in the “non-formal environment” of the local aquarium, Anderson et al. concluded that teaching in unfamiliar or non-traditional environments can help educators develop a more holistic view of education. Benefits to the new teachers are both pragmatic—they develop new teaching skills as a consequence of adapting to the new context—and philosophical—“both the individual and social aspects of constructing understanding [become] apparent in this learning environment” (p. 351). In addition, interactions with educators outside the standard educational institutions offer opportunity for teacher candidates to “develop their skills in collaborative modalities of teaching and to recognize the value and strengths of such modalities” (p. 351).

Research indicates beginning teachers with international experiences “increased their self-awareness, and enhanced their personal efficacy and understanding of cross-cultural, diversity, and globalization issues, which has informed their subsequent teaching practice in public school systems” (Mwebi & Brigham, 2009, p. 414). This educational growth is consistent with UBC’s Trek 2010 vision to prepare students to become “exceptional global citizens” by providing opportunities for student participation in international projects and study abroad programs.

EDUC 430: Community Field Experience is designed to complement teacher candidates’ school-based practicum experiences with

- a. experience in an alternate or additional setting, and
- b. varied theoretical understandings and pedagogical perspectives.

After completion of their school-based practica, teacher candidates complete a community-based field experience in their choice of local, regional or international settings.

School Sites for Community Field Experience

Teacher candidates may wish to complete the Community Field Experience in local schools, in classrooms that differ radically from where they completed their long practica. For example, a secondary teacher candidate may wish to spend three weeks with a Kindergarten class.

Teacher candidates may also wish to complete the field experience in international sites, for example, Switzerland, Mexico, Singapore, etc. Additional sites will be considered. Non-formal educational settings will be considered as well.

Sites for Community Field Experience

Teacher candidates may wish to complete the Community Field Experience in an alternate setting. Examples include:

- First Nations band school
- faith-based school
- independent school
- alternate or mini-school
- youth detention centre
- rural school
- Adult Basic Education program

Other sites might include:

- Museums, Arts/Science Centres
 - o Maritime Museum
 - o Science World
 - o Vancouver Art Gallery
 - o Museum of Anthropology
 - o Maritime museum
 - o H.R. MacMillan Space Centre
 - o Sports Hall of Fame & Museum
 - o Vancouver Police Museum
 - o Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre
- Parks study centres
 - o Dr. Sun Yat Sen Botanical Gardens
 - o Stanley Park Lost, Lagoon Nature House
 - o Queen Elizabeth Park, Bloedel Conservatory
 - o Van Dusen Botanical Garden

- Environmental Education
 - o Sea to Sky Outdoor School

 - Community Organizations
 - o Boys & Girls Club
 - o Preschool Center
 - o Community Schools e.g., Britannia, Hastings, King George Secondary
 - o Immigrant Services Society of BC
 - o MOSIAC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association) Vancouver
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Goals and Objectives

Goals for the course include an enriched and expanded understanding of the settings in which education occurs.

Teacher candidates locally and in international placements will be encouraged to

- observe in a variety of educational settings,
 - imagine aspects of non-formal, alternate or international education that might inform their classroom practice,
 - recognize and articulate educational community and/or international links to local public schools,
 - develop questions to frame an inquiry into “places of learning” outside schools,
 - collaborate with peers to share observations and develop questions,
 - demonstrate their inquiry and learning through a brief presentation.
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Course Outline

The course will consist of three components: a pre-practicum seminar, a three week placement in a community-based (or alternate school-based) setting and a post-placement reflection. The pre-placement seminar will be designed to open discussion and exploration concerning the nature of a community-based (or alternate school-based) placement, teacher candidate expectations, community (or school) partner’s expectations and preparation.

1. **Initial seminar:** teacher candidates and faculty advisors will meet to discuss their various placements. Teacher candidates will be encouraged to think about the diversity of educational contexts and how these influence their understandings of pedagogy and themselves as teachers.

2. **Field placement:** each participant will be required to maintain a journal, the format to be discussed pre-placement (depending on internet access, this could be a blog, interactive blogs, email, etc.).
The journals should connect theory and experience from their program to their community-based (or alternate school-based) placement experiences.

3. **Post-placement reflection:** participants will review their initial learning objectives and compare these with personal and professional outcomes.

Assessment and Grading

This is a PASS/FAIL course.

Obtaining a "P" standing requires:

1. active involvement in all aspects of the placement
2. collaboration with colleagues on designated projects (if applicable)
3. documentation of insights and further questions via reflections
4. attendance throughout the placement
5. completion of any tasks related to the placement

Students will demonstrate their learning by maintaining an ongoing record of:

- their observations
- their questions and reflections on diverse educational sites and discussions
- their reflection on discussions and/or collaborations (if applicable)

References

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