

Resources for Addressing Barriers in the Requirement that Practicum Hours/Student Teaching Must Be Done Outside Current Workplace

This list will be updated as the National Center learns of innovative solutions.

Issue: Requirement that Practicum Must Be Done Outside Current Workplace

Most colleges or universities require students to complete a specific number of field placements or student teaching/practicum hours at a different workplace and often with different ages of children. Faculty typically believe that such experiences expand the student's understanding of various work settings and their skills in managing classrooms and meeting the diverse developmental needs of children. However, practicums are often unpaid since they are a part of course curriculum. The majority of T.E.A.C.H. recipients are non-traditional students with full-time jobs in an early care and education setting who need that income to support themselves and their families. Leaving their site to do a practicum often means a loss of income. Sometimes when the practicum is only three hours over a semester, students can work with their employers to flex their schedules. However, when student teaching requires a six-hour per day placement over a full semester, this is not possible.

Promising Practices:

1. Allow students to complete at least part of their practicum at their workplace. Some colleges use onsite or videotaped observations to allow students to complete practicum hours at their workplace. By completing practicum hours at their own workplace, scholarship recipients maintain financial stability and improve their practice with the children they are teaching every day. This also reduces disruption for children and employers, who must find substitute teachers. [Northeast WI Technical College](#) allows students to complete one of their practicums at their current workplace as long as it is 3+ years old, has not violated licensing codes and has staff with degrees in ECE (email Mary Beth Boettcher, the Program Lead Instructor at NWTC, at marybeth.boettcher@nwtc.edu, for more info). Other colleges, such as the University of Nevada-Reno, also allow students to complete practicum hours at their current workplace.
2. Allow students to do student teaching over two semesters instead of one. Dr. Dawn Mollenkopf (mollenkopfdl@unk.edu), an ECE Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, allows students to [extend student teaching across two semesters](#), which permits them to maintain full employment in their center or home. If this was not the case, students would be required to complete practicum hours in one semester, making it difficult to maintain even part-time employment status and causing major income loss.
3. Offer T.E.A.C.H. Practicum Only scholarships. In some states with T.E.A.C.H. scholarship programs, a T.E.A.C.H. Practicum Only scholarship allows ECE students the flexibility of completing their practicum hours at another location while maintaining employment in their own center/home. This scholarship gives the recipient a financial stipend for the semester (approximately \$3,000) and offers the center/home reimbursement for substitute costs for the semester. This stipend provides the recipient time off to complete practicum requirements while still receiving income, and supports the costs of substitutes for the employer. This model also requires recipients to work 10 hours a week with their employers, maintaining some continuity for children and families. This provides a strategy when a college absolutely requires practicums to be completed in another site. By offering a Practicum Only scholarship, employers have more capacity and incentives to support their T.E.A.C.H. recipients.

If you know of any promising strategies to address this barrier and would like to share, please contact
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