



To: Cooperating teachers with student teachers from VCSU
From: Al Olson & Jackie Owen, VCSU
Re: Student teaching units (Teaching for Learning Capstone)

Thank you for partnering with Valley City State University by mentoring a student teacher in your classroom this semester! We value your leadership and the important role you play in our teacher education program.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an adjustment to what is required of our student teachers. VCSU teacher candidates have historically prepared and taught a unit during the student teaching experience. VCSU refers to the unit prepared by the teacher candidates as a “Teaching for Learning Capstone,” or TLC. The TLC unit is *similar* in concept to units created in the past in that it involves having the teacher candidate plan, implement, and evaluate a content-based unit, and then reflect on that experience.

The TLC unit is *different* from units created in the past in that it will require more depth. Teacher candidates are expected to plan content for standards-based learning so that all students will meet or exceed standards. As they plan TLC units, teacher candidates consider research-based practices of effective teaching, as well as diverse student needs, including specific needs of English Language Learners, Special Ed students, and other subgroups. Thus, teacher candidates not only plan for delivery of content, they also:

- plan for acquisition of new vocabulary
- plan for differentiated instruction
- plan for the use of technology to enhance learning
- plan for classroom management
- plan for formative and summative assessment

In addition to requiring more depth in planning, the TLC also demands more depth in implementation, evaluation, and reflection. Your teacher candidates will be teaching a three to five day learning segment from his/her TLC unit. The teaching will be video recorded to show examples of effective *implementation* of scaffolding vocabulary instruction, differentiated instruction, use of technology, classroom management, and formative and summative assessment. Your teacher candidate will evaluate instruction and learning nightly during the implementation of the TLC unit. Segments of the video recordings will be used for further reflection for professional growth.

When you and your teacher candidate begin communicating, discussing ideas for the TLC unit is an important. The teacher candidate teacher will need several weeks to prepare a unit that will meet your curricular needs as well as meet the requirements of the TLC. You may choose to assign a specific topic/focus for TLC unit development, or you may choose to involve your student teacher in the decision making process towards unit topic selection.

We would like teacher candidates to know as soon as possible what topic/focus they will be developing for their TLC units, because the School of Education and Graduate Studies at VCSU will be supporting students in developing these units.

We anticipate that each unit will require implementation of a learning segment of three to five days of instruction. During this time, the teacher candidate may enlist your assistance in helping to video record implementation of the TLC unit. Also, during the week that the unit is presented, we are requesting that the teacher candidate have light participation in other classroom duties in order to fully focus on implementation, evaluation, and reflection of the TLC. Accordingly, we ask that the TLC unit NOT be taught during the solo experience.

We would like to note that those student teachers with experiences in both kindergarten and elementary will complete their TLC unit only during their elementary experience. Student teachers with more than one placement, such as a K-12 major, will complete only one TLC unit during their semester of student teaching.

We believe that the TLC process will improve both teaching and learning. Again, thank you so much for being part of our team!

Sincerely,

Al Olson and Jackie Owen