



B.C.'s Energy College™

Northern Lights College
Early Childhood Education
and Care
Program (ECEC)

PRACTICUM IV
ECED 208
Infants and Toddlers
Sponsor/Mentor Guide

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Northern Lights College Practicum IV (Infants and Toddlers) Sponsor/ Mentor Guide

This handbook has been developed to help Sponsor Educators recognize Northern Lights College's team approach to providing valuable practicum experiences for student Early Childhood Educators. We believe that the practicum should benefit all of those involved. With this handbook, we hope to answer some of the questions that naturally arise.

Please keep this handbook accessible and refer to it when needed.

DEFINITIONS AND ROLES

NLC Requirements for Practicum Placements

- A Licensed Early Childhood Education and Care Centre
- The Sponsor Educator has a Current BC Early Childhood (5yr or 1 yr.) Infant Toddlers Certificate to Practice
- At least three (3) children under 30 months are in attendance on a regular basis
- If students are completing a practicum within their workplace, a Work place agreement has been completed with copies for the student, Sponsor and NLC Instructor
- A NLC Practicum Placement Agreement Form has been completed with copies for the ECE Instructor
- A flexible program and staff support to allow students to practice what they are learning in their courses within the philosophy of the Centre
 - Any exceptions are discussed with the Northern Lights College Practicum Instructor or the Program Chair and/or Practicum Advisor

Sponsor Educator/Mentor

The Sponsor Educator has the most contact with the student and serves in a mentoring role.

- The Placement Centre should be functioning well to support a positive practicum experience for all (for example - It is difficult to extend support to a student if there is staff, program, or financial upheavals...).
- Students look to Sponsor Educators/Mentor and Placement Staff to share knowledge, perspectives, and resources.
- Students will require time to discuss their progress with the Sponsor Educator/Mentor weekly. Please find a time that works for all parties to keep each person update on assignment expectation, course sharing and continual mentorship.
- Students are encouraged to wonder, to ask questions, and try out what they are learning in ECE courses. The course content focuses on current the British Columbia Early Learning Framework(BCELF) 2008 and the Principles of Care (RIE) practice. Students will have assignments to complete that require collaboration, support, and flexibility on the part of the program, staff, and parents to meet current practices within BC.

Mentoring: - what does that look like for student growth?

- Students should be directly supervised during all practicum hours by the Sponsor Educator and/or a designated senior staff person.
- The Sponsor Educator models and mentors the student; therefore, attitudes towards colleagues and parents of the children are respectful, so that the student gains an understanding of professional behavior.
- The Sponsor Educator makes efforts to understand the developmental level of the student, so that responsibilities can be matched to the student's abilities. (Responsibilities increase with time.) Practicum Instructors can also help in this area.
- The Sponsor Educator gives clear directions about what is expected of the student in their practicum programs and encourages the student to feel like part of the teaching team.
- The Sponsor Educator supports students' experiences/practice that will reinforce their classroom learning.
- Sponsor Educators understand that students make mistakes. Much is learned from our mistakes! (Intervene only if the student is getting into a potentially dangerous situation due to inexperience.)

Practicum Instructor

The Northern Lights College Early Childhood Education and Care (NLC ECEC) Practicum Instructor organizes the practicum experience with the student and the Sponsor Educator. The role of the Practicum Instructor includes

- supporting the student in setting up the practicum experience
- supporting the Sponsor Educator in her/his role and facilitating communication between all parties involved in the practicum.
- encouraging the student's personal growth by giving feedback on course requirements and assignments
- facilitating the weekly group practicum seminar
- assessing the student's completion of course requirements and assigning a final grade.

Work Place Practicum

The following is to be considered for an "at work practicum".

- An "at work practicum" must be approved by the Practicum Advisor or Instructor first.
- The Sponsor Educator must be able to work directly with the student.
- Participants are asked to explore and be aware of all possible effects on working relationships (both positive and challenging).
- Practicum may potentially add additional workload to the other staff members who are involved in the practicum.
- The student and Sponsor Educator must feel that objectivity is possible.
- The student must be able to attend to practicum needs and requirements while working.
- The role of the staff member will supersede that of a student in situations where safety or ratio are needed.
- The goals and reflection for the practicum must include attention to the work relationship.
- The **Work Placement Agreement Form and NLC Practicum Placement Agreement Form** must be filled out and submitted to the Instructor prior to beginning the placement. [Practicum Days must be clearly designated as per the Practicum Proposal and NLC Practicum Placement Agreement Form.](#)
- The Practicum Instructor must be informed by D2L email of any changes to attendance dates and times. A revised form must be completed if hours are extended beyond the finish date. This is completed by the NLC Student.
- Students and Sponsor Educators should think about whether a potential conflict exists or could arise if the student's child is receiving care at the same time the student is completing a practicum (whether as an employee or not).

GENERAL PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

The following guidelines have been prepared to facilitate and clarify the working situation between students of Northern Lights College and Sponsor Educators during practicum placement.

Sponsor Educators are valued for the way that they are helpful to students by their use of personal encouragement and constructive feedback. This is usually accomplished through brief, frequent conferences with the student.

1. Placement Attendance:

Signed Attendance Sheets are kept for the duration of the practicum period. The student is responsible for filling out the Attendance Sheets with the dates and times, and the Sponsor Educator signs/initials the practicum hours. It works best when the sheet is signed daily, as it is hard to remember exact hours after some time has elapsed.

Note: Students must keep copies of their attendance records to be submitted with their convocation application as proof of p hours toward graduation.

2. Scheduling Placement Attendance:

It's important that Sponsor Educators and students discuss and come to an agreement on a working schedule that is compatible for both. (Be sure to schedule around holidays!)

Placement Hours:

The practicum consists of a minimum of 200 hours of experience in the practicum placement.

The 200 hours are spread over a minimum of 10 weeks in the practicum center.

If the student stays on site for lunch / breaks this can be viewed as time in the program as it is part of team building and informal professional development

Students who attend conferences and or workshops during practicum time may count these hour towards their 200 total.

Students may need to schedule hours around holidays and make up time for absences/sick days.

NLC Practicum Placement Form: Students are required to arrange make-up time with the Sponsor Educator and inform the Practicum Instructor, in writing, of the revised schedule to meet the dates and times listed in NLC Practicum Placement Agreement (PPA) Form. If any changes are made to the start/finish dates signed on the original agreement, a new copy must be signed by both parties and submitted to the Instructor.

3. Confidentiality

Students and Instructors of Northern Lights College Early Childhood Education program follow strict guidelines regarding confidentiality. All discussions regarding practicum requirements are confidential in nature. Students are **not** to discuss any aspect of their practicum outside of the parameters of the course. Breaches in confidentiality could be viewed by the placement center as a reason to discontinue the practicum experience. Northern Lights College adheres to the guidelines for reporting abuse as found in *The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect*.

In the interest of safety for all those concerned, a student should not be left alone with a child or children, meaning that the Sponsor Educator or other staff maintains overall supervision within sight or sound. The intent is that students should not be placed in a supervisory role. The only exception is when a student is also working in the center. Then the role of staff member supersedes that of a student for safety purposes.

4. In Case of Illness

Students are expected to **email / text / or call** the Practicum Instructor and call the Sponsor Educator by 8 am in cases of sickness or inability to attend daily practicum sessions. Students should not attend their placement if ill or due to injury are not able to interact fully with children. Sponsor Educators who believe the student is too ill to be at the center are encouraged to send the student home. Once the student is well, hours can be rescheduled.

5. Other NLC Expectations

As part of their course load (assignments), students are expected to plan and carry out specific experiences/assignments in the practicum center for other courses they are enrolled in. They are expected to collaborate with their Sponsor Educators in facilitating a time, space, and basic materials to carry out their experiences. Any extraordinary materials or equipment needed for an activity will be provided by the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the materials are available.

6. Facilitating Students' Practice

Please inform the student of the center policies in regards to how they are to be addressed by the children: (for example – first name, Miss, Mrs. or Mr.). Initially, students will be involved in an observation and or assistant role to facilitate relationship building with children, staff, and families.

Right from the start, **students are encouraged to practice positive guidance and respectful support for children's emergent learning through observation of ordinary moments.**

The student should eventually participate in all areas of the program including preparation and cleanup. Spontaneous implementation of curriculum possibilities in response to children's interests and program needs as well as leading already planned activities allow the student opportunities for valuable experience. It is hoped that Sponsor Educators can support students in taking initiative to engage in these curriculum activities and provide ongoing feedback on a regular.

7. Placement Dress Code

Students are expected to adhere to the dress code of the practicum center, Workman's Compensation BC and to be professional and respectful in their appearance. Please inform the student of your requirements in this area.

Students are expected to wear/model appropriate clothing for the weather! Inside shoes are expected to be worn in case of emergency evacuation.

Students are requested to wear their name tags while at the practicum center even if in a workplace practicum as it helps to remind parents and staff when the employee is also in a student role. This helps to alleviate some confusion with parents and visitors to the center and promotes awareness of the student's and program's commitment to professional development and quality early childhood education and care.

8. Placement Orientation

A warm welcome for the student can be established and maintained by:

Meeting with the student prior to the first day to get better acquainted. Exchanging email addresses and telephone contact phone numbers is helpful.

The student's introduction to the center can set the tone for the practicum. Introduce them to the center. Students indicate that starting a new practicum is like starting a new job. They need to know the things that you would tell them if they were new employees. It is helpful if

you indicate, from the beginning, what your expectations are. This could include many of the responsibilities and activities that you expect of regular staff. Let them know when you want them to arrive (15 minutes early, for e.g. to get settled and prepared for the practicum day), and that you look forward to supporting her/his practice teaching. For example, ensure the student is aware of the program philosophy and has an opportunity to ask questions for clarification. Inform the student of the daily schedule and usual transition from one activity to the next. Describe how the program/activities are planned. (Please allow for students to try some different approaches and types of activities.)

On the practical side, students need to know where to put their belongings, staff washroom, break and lunch policies, if there is a staff room they can use during breaks, where the center resources are, equipment policies, what policies and procedures are in place for emergencies, including information on allergies and any other factors that are necessary for them to know to ensure children's well-being.

Let them know the jobs they may do. (Initially, the student is in the role of observer / assistant) These jobs might include the following:

- To participate in the greeting and going home routines. Encourage the student to take the initiative to introduce themselves to parents as they drop off or pick up their child. Initial introductions/greeting can evolve to brief interchanges based on observations of children's interests and "ordinary moments".
- To assist in transition times
- To assist in maintaining and creating respectful environments
- To take on a supportive role during group time to begin with: sitting with the children, helping them to focus on the lead educator. When the roles are reversed, staff would then support the student in the same manner.
- Having students work with small groups is often best at the beginning of the practicum.
- Let the student know when it would be convenient to discuss the program, children, and practicum requirements/assignments on a daily and weekly basis. While daily communication may be more spontaneous, a regular weekly planning time (i.e. Tuesdays at 8:15) would ensure that both of you can count on this time to share ideas and plans.
- Daily communication to confirm plans supports working as a team. Sponsor Educators and students have found it quite helpful to set aside a regular time to briefly am in contact: e.g. right before or after scheduled practicum hours.

9. Guiding and Caring Policies

- Discuss the program Guidance Philosophy with your student and how you set limits and guide children's behavior. (Please be open to students practicing positive, guidance and explaining / practicing guidance strategies and the constructive guidance approach they are learning in their NLC HDEC 103 Guiding and Caring course!) Guidance methods support the strategies outlined in the BC Ministry Handbook- Guiding Young Children's Behavior
- Encourage the student to consider the role of the environment in guiding children's behavior. For example, what does the student notice about traffic patterns, amount of space, indirect guidance.
- Encourage the student to engage children in problem-solving/conflict resolution appropriate to stages of development
- Please invite the student to discuss with you any questions they have as they strive to understand how staff decide on approaches to guiding children's behavior. A direct invitation would help your student feel comfortable to take the initiative to ask questions.

10. Student Competency Feedback

To facilitate the process of building professional competencies and maximize the learning experience, there are three methods of feedback.

- a) **Practicum Competency Booklet:** This booklet is designed so that the Sponsor Educator can use it. It is based on the **Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies Assessment Tool** (2004). The Sponsor Educator is asked to observe, document and discuss with the student, their level of competency at mid-term and again at or near the end of the practicum. The student will also be completing their own competency checklist which is like the Sponsor Competency Assessment booklet as part of their own self reflection
- b) **2 Perspective Sharing 3 way conversations** will take place over the term. One at midterm and one near the end of term. The student will organize the times for the student, the site sponsor, and the college instructor to meet via video / teleconference to share perspectives on the practicum time. The focus will be on the Principles of Care and or Competencies in action.
- c) **Practicum Competency Booklets** are submitted to the Practicum Instructor after the practicum is completed. The Student can collect the Competency Booklet completed by her/his Sponsor Educator scan and send into the course drop box or the Sponsor Educator can complete the Competency Booklet electronically and email, share via google drive or fax it directly to the Practicum Instructor.
- d) **Assignments:** Practicum Instructors evaluate course assignments. Practicum assignments may include some or all the following

- NLC ECE Competencies Checklist- student and sponsor complete throughout practicum and submitted to Instructor at end of practicum
- Personal learning journals reflecting on their interactions and their perspectives of theory in practice, including at least 1 video journal of themselves in action.
- Pedagogical Narrations
- Action Research project
- Child Study
- Or any personal assignment the student/ sponsor and instructor agree to put into action
- Seminar group advocacy project

IN CLOSING

Each student is an individual, and it takes time to get to know your student's level of skill. As you become familiar and comfortable with the student, please encourage the student to take on a larger role. We have found that encouraging and challenging the student facilitates the process of confidence and growth. This, of course, will be different with each student and each center.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Practicum Sponsor Educators who help students realize their goal in becoming Early Childhood Educators.

We appreciate the time, energy, and support that you give to supporting a valuable and memorable experience and quality early childhood education and care!

Please take the time to fill out the Feedback Form below and submit at the end of the practicum; your ideas are appreciated and will be taken into consideration as our practicum design evolves to meet the needs of students, sponsors, children, and their families.

Mentor Professional Development Opportunity

Practicum is an important aspect to early childhood education training. Practicum involves a partnership between the student, the college, and the center. We recognize and appreciate the contribution, support, and expertise provided by you and your center. If you are interested in completing your own professional development during practicum we have developed a Mentor Reflective Practice guide that you can work on with the course instructor which may include:

- a) Submitting or sharing regular professional perspective conversations with the Practicum instructor
- b) Setting and documenting progress on professional goals
- c) Participating in a professional article / video reading/ viewing circle
- d) Facilitating a seminar workshop with students

Thank you

