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Mentoring an Educational Diagnostician Candidate

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to host a Sul Ross State University Graduate Student at your district. Your practicum student is enrolled in the Educational Diagnostician program at the University and must complete at least 160 clock hours to fulfill the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requirement for students seeking this professional certification.

This document and the Practicum Handbook serve as reference for you and serve as the formal training document for site supervisors as required by TEA. This is a guide for mentoring the educational diagnostician student who will fulfill the practicum requirements.

Please contact me if there are any questions or concerns. The appendix section will have necessary paperwork to complete. An orientation meeting invite will be sent the second week of the semesters for Site Supervisors. In the meantime, feel free to reach out anytime.

Sincerely,

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OVERVIEW

A mentor (also called a site supervisor) for an Educational Diagnostician should be knowledgeable about the field and have the ability to provide guidance and support. They should also be able to help the diagnostician develop their skills and knowledge base.

Here are some main points to guide you as you supervise your candidate on your campus. Here is what is expected of the successful practicum candidate:

KNOWLEDGE

The Educational Diagnostician candidate should develop a comprehensive knowledge base, professional dispositions, and the skills that enable them to be an effective instructional leader.

- Know the theories and research of our field and apply them to improve instruction for students with exceptional learning needs.
- Be reflective practitioners

TECHNOLOGY

The Educational Diagnostician candidate should use technology to create an authentic learning environment that promotes problem-solving and decision making.

- Use technology to support the learning and teaching of students with exceptional learning needs.

COMMUNICATION

The Educational Diagnostician candidate should use effective communication skills with a diverse group of stakeholders.

- Know and use the discourse of our profession
- Work collaboratively with students, parents, administrators, and colleagues
- Advocate for the rights for all children
- Demonstrate a high level of professionalism, a commitment to academic honesty, and a joyful enthusiasm for learning

ASSESSMENT

The Educational Diagnostician candidate should demonstrate an understanding of assessment as an on-going process to become effective evaluators of children, programs, and themselves.

- Know and use appropriate assessment tools with individuals, groups, and for identification and program effectiveness
- Demonstrate the ability to assess, evaluate, and design school and district level special education programs

FIELD EXPERIENCE WITH DIVERSE LEARNERS

The Educational Diagnostician candidate should demonstrate an ability to teach and/or mentor a variety of learners and/or peers in diverse settings using culturally responsive and learner sensitive instruction.

- Know and use appropriate instructional strategies with diverse learners, preschool through adult
- Know and develop effective individualized education plans for students with exceptional learning needs. Serve as change agents through professional involvement

Some ideas whether you have been a mentor before, or if this is your first time:

Start with Clear Expectations: Set the stage early on by discussing the goals of the practicum experience, outlining what you both hope to accomplish, and identifying specific skills or knowledge areas the candidate needs to develop. Establish open lines of communication so they feel comfortable asking questions.

Model Best Practices: As the mentor, you will want to be a role model in terms of professionalism, ethical conduct, and best practices. Demonstrating your thought process during assessments, observations, and decision-making can help the practicum candidate understand how to approach cases from both a technical and a compassionate perspective.

Encourage Reflective Practice: After each activity or observation, ask questions that prompt reflection—both on what went well and what could be improved. Encourage the candidate to think critically about their own practice and how they can grow in the field.

Provide Constructive Feedback: Be specific with your feedback. Positive reinforcement is just as important as constructive criticism, so balance the two. Focus on areas of strength while gently guiding the candidate in areas that need improvement.

Be Patient and Supportive: Remember that everyone was a beginner at one point. Practicum candidates may make mistakes, and it's important to create a supportive environment where they feel safe to learn from them. Be patient with their learning curve and celebrate their successes, no matter how small.

Foster Independence: While it's crucial to offer guidance, it's equally important to encourage autonomy. Provide opportunities for the candidate to take the lead in assessments, reports, or meetings while offering support when needed.

Reflect on Your Own Mentoring Style: Be mindful of your own approach and adjust as necessary. Every candidate is different, and what works for one may not work for another. Adapt your style to meet the needs of your mentee and ensure a positive learning experience.

Document and Track Progress: Keep track of the practicum candidate's growth, areas for improvement, and any feedback you provide. This documentation will not only help you assess their progress but also guide you in giving focused, purposeful feedback throughout the experience.

Ask for Help if You Need It: Remember that the candidate has a Sul Ross State University Field Supervisor who is a certified Educational Diagnostician as well. The Field Supervisor will remain in contact with you during the semester as well as schedule formal and informal observations with the candidate. If you have any questions, please reach out to the candidate's Field Supervisor. You will be documenting portions of the practicum and your candidate's experience using an online assessment system, Watermark SLL. Again, please reach out if you need assistance with this product.

Finally, enjoy the experience! Mentoring can be incredibly rewarding. It gives you a chance to reflect on your own practice while shaping the next generation of educational diagnosticians.

TEA STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIAN

Title 19, Part 7, Chapter 239, Subchapter C, Rule §239.83

Standards Required for the Educational Diagnostician Certificate

(a) The knowledge and skills identified in this section must be used by an educator preparation program in the development of curricula and coursework and by the State Board for Educator Certification as the basis for developing the examination required to obtain the standard Educational Diagnostician Certificate. The standards also serve as the foundation for the professional growth plan and continuing professional education activities required by §239.85 of this title (relating to Requirements to Renew the Standard Educational Diagnostician Certificate).

(b) Standard I. The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of the purpose, philosophy, and legal foundations of evaluation and special education.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) state and federal regulations relevant to the role of the educational diagnostician.

(B) laws and legal issues related to the assessment and evaluation of individuals with educational needs;

(C) models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education evaluations;

(D) issues, assurances, and due process rights related to evaluation, eligibility, and placement in the least restrictive environment within a continuum of services; and

(E) rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians, schools, students, and teachers and other professionals in relation to individual learning needs.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) articulate the purpose of evaluation procedures and their relationship to educational programming; and

(B) conduct evaluations and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of laws, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.

(c) Standard II. The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of ethical and professional practices, roles, and responsibilities.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) ethical practices regarding procedural safeguards (e.g., confidentiality issues, informed consent) for individuals with disabilities;

(B) ethical practices related to assessment and evaluation;

(C) qualifications necessary to administer and interpret various instruments and procedures; and

(D) organizations and publications relevant to the field of educational diagnosis.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) demonstrate commitment to developing quality educational opportunities appropriate for individuals with disabilities;

(B) demonstrate positive regard for the culture, gender, and personal beliefs of individual students;

(C) promote and maintain a high level of competence and integrity in the practice of the profession;

(D) exercise objective professional judgment in the practice of the profession;

(E) engage in professional activities that benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, and/or colleagues;

(F) comply with local, state, and federal monitoring and evaluation requirements;

(G) use copyrighted educational materials in an ethical manner; and

(H) participate in the activities of professional organizations in the field of educational diagnosis.

(d) Standard III. The educational diagnostician develops collaborative relationships with families, educators, the school, the community, outside agencies, and related service personnel.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) strategies for promoting effective communication and collaboration with others, including parents/guardians and school and community personnel, in a culturally responsive manner;

(B) concerns of parents/guardians of individuals with exceptional learning needs and appropriate strategies to help parents/guardians address these concerns;

(C) strategies for developing educational programs for individuals through collaboration with team members;

(D) roles of individuals with disabilities, parents/caregivers, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning educational programs for individuals; and

(E) family systems and the role of families in supporting student development and educational progress.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) use collaborative strategies in working with individuals with disabilities, parents/caregivers, and school and community personnel in various learning environments;

(B) communicate and consult effectively with individuals, parents/guardians, teachers, and other school and community personnel;

(C) foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and education professionals;

(D) encourage and assist individuals with disabilities and their families to become active participants in the educational team;

(E) plan and conduct collaborative conferences with individuals who have exceptional learning needs and their families or primary caregivers;

(F) collaborate with classroom teachers and other school and community personnel in including individuals with exceptional learning needs in various learning environments;

(G) communicate with classroom teachers, administrators, and other school personnel about characteristics and needs of individuals with disabilities;

(H) use appropriate communication skills to report and interpret assessment and evaluation results;

(I) provide assistance to others who collect informal and observational data;

(J) effectively communicate to parents/guardians and professionals the purposes, methods, findings, and implications of assessments; and

(K) keep accurate and detailed records of assessments, evaluations, and related proceedings (e.g., admission, review, and dismissal/individualized education program (ARD/IEP) meetings, parent/guardian communications and notifications).

(e) Standard IV. The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of student assessment and evaluation, program planning, and instructional decision making.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) the characteristics, needs, and rights of individual students in relation to assessment and evaluation for placement in the least restrictive environment within a continuum of services;

(B) the relationship between evaluation and placement decisions; and

(C) the role of team members, including the student when appropriate, in planning an individualized program.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) use assessment and evaluation information to plan individualized programs, establish measurable annual goals and objectives, and make instructional decisions that result in appropriate services for individuals with disabilities, including those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;

(B) interpret and use assessment and evaluation data for targeted instruction and ongoing review; and

(C) assist in identifying realistic expectations for educationally relevant behavior (e.g., vocational, functional, academic, social) in various settings.

(f) Standard V. The educational diagnostician knows eligibility criteria and procedures for identifying students with disabilities and determining the presence of an educational need.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) characteristics of individuals with disabilities, including those with different levels of severity and with multiple disabilities;

(B) educational implications of various disabilities; and

(C) the variation in ability exhibited by individuals with particular types of disabilities.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) access information on the cognitive, communicative, physical, social, and emotional characteristics of individuals with disabilities and the assistive technology needs of those students;

(B) gather background information regarding the academic, medical, and family history of individuals with disabilities; and

(C) use various types of assessment and evaluation procedures appropriately to identify students with disabilities and to determine the presence of an educational need.

(g) Standard VI. The educational diagnostician selects, administers, and interprets appropriate formal and informal assessments and evaluations.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) basic terminology used in assessment and evaluation;

(B) standards for test reliability;

(C) standards for test validity;

(D) procedures used in standardizing assessment instruments;

(E) possible sources of test error;

(F) the meaning and use of basic statistical concepts used in assessment and evaluation (e.g., standard error of measurement, mean, standard deviation);

(G) uses and limitations of each type of assessment instrument;

(H) uses and limitations of various types of assessment data;

(I) procedures for screening, prereferral, including RTI (e.g., response to intervention/multi-tiered support), referral, and eligibility;

(J) the appropriate application and interpretation of derived scores (e.g., standard scores, percentile ranks, age and grade equivalents, stanines);

(K) the necessity of monitoring the progress of individuals with disabilities;

(L) methods of academic and nonacademic (e.g., vocational, transition, developmental, assistive technology) assessment and evaluation; and

(M) methods of motor skills assessment.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

- (A) collaborate with families and other professionals in the assessment and evaluation of individuals with disabilities;
- (B) select and use assessment and evaluation materials based on technical quality and individual student needs;
- (C) score assessment and evaluation instruments accurately;
- (D) create and maintain assessment reports;
- (E) select or modify assessment procedures to ensure nonbiased results;
- (F) use a variety of observation techniques;
- (G) assess and interpret information using formal/informal instruments and procedures in the areas of cognitive/adaptive behavior and academic skills;
- (H) determine the need for further assessment in the areas of language skills, physical skills, social/emotional behavior, and assistive technology;
- (I) determine a student's needs in various curricular areas and make intervention, instructional, and transition planning recommendations based on assessment and evaluation results;
- (J) make recommendations based on assessment and evaluation results;
- (K) prepare assessment reports; and
- (L) use performance data and information from teachers, other professionals, individuals with disabilities, and parents/guardians to make or suggest appropriate modifications and/or accommodations within learning environments.

(h) Standard VII. The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity and the significance of student diversity for evaluation, planning, and instruction.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

- (A) issues related to definition and identification procedures for individuals with disabilities, including individuals from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- (B) characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental backgrounds of students and their families, including cultural and linguistic diversity, socioeconomic diversity, abuse/neglect, and substance abuse;

(C) issues related to the representation in special education of populations that are culturally and linguistically diverse;

(D) ways in which native language and diversity may affect evaluation; and

(E) strategies that are responsive to the diverse backgrounds and particular disabilities of individuals in relation to evaluation, programming, and placement.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) apply knowledge of cultural and linguistic factors to make appropriate evaluation decisions and instructional recommendations for individuals with disabilities; and

(B) recognize how student diversity and particular disabilities may affect evaluation, programming, and placement and use procedures that ensure nonbiased results.

(i) Standard VIII. The educational diagnostician knows and demonstrates skills necessary for scheduling, time management, and organization.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

(A) time-management strategies and systems appropriate for various educational situations and environments;

(B) legal and regulatory timelines, schedules, deadlines, and reporting requirements; and

(C) methods for organizing, maintaining, accessing, and storing records and information.

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) select, adapt, or design forms to facilitate planning, scheduling, and time management;

(B) maintain eligibility folders; and

(C) use technology appropriately to organize information and schedules.

(j) Standard IX. The educational diagnostician addresses students' behavioral and social interaction skills through appropriate assessment, evaluation, planning, and instructional strategies.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

- (A) requirements and procedures for functional behavioral assessment, manifestation determination review, and behavioral intervention plans that incorporate positive behavioral supports and interventions;
- (B) applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the planning and implementation of behavioral intervention plans for individuals with disabilities;
- (C) ethical considerations inherent in behavior interventions;
- (D) teacher attitudes and behaviors that influence the behavior of individuals with disabilities;
- (E) social skills needed for school, home, community, and work environments;
- (F) strategies for crisis prevention, intervention, and management;
- (G) strategies for preparing individuals to live productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world; and
- (H) key concepts in behavior intervention (e.g., least intrusive accommodations/ modifications within the learning environment, reasonable expectations for social behavior, social skills curricula, cognitive behavioral strategies).

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

- (A) conduct functional behavioral assessments;
- (B) assist in the development of behavioral intervention plans; and
- (C) participate in manifestation determination review.

(k) Standard X. The educational diagnostician knows and understands appropriate curricula and instructional strategies for individuals with disabilities.

(1) The educational diagnostician knows and understands:

- (A) instructional strategies, technology tools and applications, and curriculum materials for students with disabilities within the continuum of services;
- (B) varied learning styles of individuals with disabilities;
- (C) curricula for the development of motor, cognitive, academic, social, language, affective, career, and functional skills for individuals with disabilities;
- (D) techniques for accommodating and/or modifying instructional methods and materials for individuals with disabilities;

(E) functional skills instruction relevant to transitioning across environments (e.g., preschool to elementary school, school to work);

(F) supports needed for integration into various program placements; and

(G) individualized assessment strategies for instruction (e.g., authentic assessment, contextual assessment, curriculum-based assessment).

(2) The educational diagnostician is able to:

(A) interpret and use assessment and evaluation data for instructional planning; and

(B) use assessment and evaluation, planning, and management procedures that are appropriate in relation to student needs and the instructional environment.