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Internships: Wisconsin Improvement Program

What is the Wisconsin Improvement Program?

The [Wisconsin Improvement Program](#) (WIP) is a consortium of teacher education institutions, and the DPI. The purpose of WIP is to promote and encourage the professional development and education of teachers throughout their careers. Promising teacher interns are placed in school districts with experienced and welcoming cooperating teachers for a full semester. The internship program offers teacher candidates a chance to enter the profession as licensed teachers with an intern license.

Two major initiatives of WIP are the teacher intern program and the funding of professional development programs for interns and cooperating teachers throughout the state.

WIP gives final approval to internship designs as they are submitted and amended, and coordinates placement between districts that need interns and campuses that have qualified students. The intern experience is an important component of the teacher education program, and all parties must strive to ensure that a supportive learning environment exists.

What is a WIP Teacher Internship?

Each WIP internship is designed by the cooperating school and the participating college or university. An internship is organized around an intern team. The team guides and advises the teacher intern. The intern team consists of the teacher intern, the cooperating teacher, select school staff, and the college or university supervisor who provide input, direction, and support for the teacher intern.

Who is a Teacher Intern?

The teacher intern is a student in the process of completing a teacher education program leading to professional licensure. Interns are selected based on criteria established by individual campuses. Interns are licensed by the Department of Public Instruction. Intern applicants are interviewed and selected based on high admission standards. Interns are paid a minimum stipend of $4,500 per semester by the district while working under the guidance of an experienced cooperating teacher, and the district pays a $500 professional development fee per intern per semester to the DPI.

What is the Intern's Role in the School District?

The teacher intern assumes a partial teaching assignment. The assignment can be no more than 50 percent of the workload of a full-time teacher in the district. *The rule applies to time, not number of assigned students.*

The intern is assigned a variety of instructional duties; planning, teaching, observing, and conferring with colleagues. **The intern is not a substitute teacher**. An intern usually is not enrolled in formal coursework during the internship. The actual workload of an intern will vary depending on the program worked out by team members.

What is the Role of the Cooperating Teacher?

The cooperating teacher provides day-to-day guidance to the intern and is available to observe the intern and provide feedback on a daily basis. The cooperating teacher introduces the intern to other team members, other faculty, administrators, and resource persons in the school district, and orients the intern to team operations. The cooperating teacher will also advise the intern on the expectations of the school building, district, and community; and how to maintain student-teacher-parent rapport and professional ethics. The cooperating teacher will report to the intern's college or university and complete an evaluation of the intern necessary for the intern's certification.

What Role does the School Principal Play?

The school principal shares some of the duties of the cooperating teacher in helping to orient the intern to the school system, the staff, and the community. The principal also ensures that the intern has adequate time to confer with the cooperating teacher.

What is the DPI's role in the Intern Process?

The following is a list of criteria used for the approval of internship designs:

a. The intern schedule is to be no more than 50 percent workload of a full-time teacher.
b. The overriding consideration in making decisions about intern design approval is the welfare of the intern.
c. For a successful intern design, adequate day-to-day time must be provided for the cooperating teacher and intern for planning, observing, and evaluating.
d. The cooperating teacher must be a voluntary participant in the intern team and must meet legal requirements as specified in Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 34.15(6).
e. Intern designs should be supported by the entire educational community and should be viewed by members of the educational community as an enhancement to the district program.
f. Each design must ensure that the intern will receive an experience that will include the teaching activities needed to meet the requirements of the individual's certification area.
g. Intern designs are approved for one-semester placements.

Process for Intern Application at UWSP

Interest in being considered for an internship does not replace the traditional student teaching process. All student teaching application paperwork and online information must be provided according to posted deadlines. Student teaching placements are sought for all student teaching candidates. In the event that a student is a successful applicant for an internship, the student teaching placement is cancelled.

Important things to consider:
- A cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 is required.
- Internship placements are for a full semester in a single setting. If your desired certification requires multiple placements, an internship is only an option if you extend your student teaching to accommodate the additional placement(s).

- Internship opportunities are made available throughout the period leading up to the semester; flexibility of the candidate is crucial.
- Available internships will be emailed periodically from the Office of Field Experiences (OFE) to soon-to-be teacher candidates. It is the **student's responsibility** to inform the OFE of interest in specific postings.
- A student may not accept an internship within one month of the start of a confirmed student teaching placement.
- Fees associated with internship placements include $200 (program fee); $50 (license application); corresponding out of service area fees, as appropriate.

Interested applicants must follow this process to be considered:

1. Watch the list of DPI approved internships that is emailed from the Office of Field Experiences.
2. Secure <u>three</u> letters of recommendation and have them emailed to the Office of Field Experiences. At least two of the letters must be from UWSP instructors. These will be included in an application packet sent by the OFE to the host school/district. References should focus on abilities/competencies to function independently in the role of intern.
3. Once you find a DPI approved internship, communicate your interest in applying by emailing the Office of Field Experiences (field.experiences@uwsp.edu). Be sure to include the following information...
   - Your Information
     - Name
     - Certification Area(s) and Grade Range(s)
   - Internship Information
     - District
     - Internship #
   - Reference Information (Provide 3)
     - Name
     - Title
     - Email
4. Feedback from department faculty and staff will be solicited by the OFE.
5. The OFE will send application packet(s) to schools/districts requested by the student.
6. Schools/districts determine whom they would like to interview for positions.
7. The school districts contact students for interviews, interview the candidates, and contact all those interviewed to inform them of their decision. Notify the OFE if you schedule an interview for a placement – and of the results.
8. If an offer to hire is made, schedule a meeting **ASAP** with the Office of Field Experiences Manager to complete an online application for the intern license. Doing this informs all other universities that the placement is filled.

There are many uncertainties about internships. The Office of Field Experiences cannot be sure of the content and timing of any such assignment, but will make every effort to assure that your application will be fully considered and fairly handled.