Student teachers can be an incredible asset to a classroom and school community – now more than ever. As schools navigate in-person, hybrid, and distance learning settings, several questions about the roles a student teacher can play are addressed below.

Can a student teacher serve as a substitute teacher while the cooperating teacher is absent?

It depends. If the student teacher holds a short-call substitute teaching license, then the student teacher may serve as a substitute teacher for up to 15 consecutive school days while the cooperating teacher is absent.

If the student teacher holds a Tier 2 license, then the student teacher may serve as a substitute teacher while the cooperating teacher is absent. In this scenario, the student teacher may serve as a substitute teacher for more than 15 consecutive school days.

If the student teacher does not hold a license of any kind, then the student teacher cannot serve as a substitute teacher while the cooperating teacher is absent. There must be a teacher licensed for the assignment (i.e., Tier 1, 2, 3, or 4 license, or substitute teaching license) in the classroom while the cooperating teacher is absent.

While the cooperating teacher is absent, the teacher preparation provider must ensure the student teacher is receiving ongoing support, observations, and feedback.

Can a student teacher serve as the teacher of record?

Yes, if the student teacher holds a license aligned to the assignment (i.e., a Tier 2 license).

If a student teacher is serving as the teacher of record, the teacher preparation provider is responsible for identifying a cooperating teacher to provide the student teacher with ongoing support, observations, and feedback.
Can a student teacher be alone in a classroom with students (i.e., without a cooperating teacher)?

It depends. If the student teacher is serving as the substitute or the teacher of record, the student teacher may be alone with students.

If the student teacher is not the substitute or teacher of record in that particular classroom, then the cooperating teacher is responsible for the students during student contact time. For short durations of time, a student teacher may be unsupervised in a classroom with students. For times when the cooperating teacher is not present in the classroom, the understanding is that the cooperating teacher is still responsible for the learning and safety of the students in the classroom. The cooperating teacher must provide adequate direction to the student teacher. Similar to paraprofessionals and other educational support staff, student teachers can:

- Supervise and provide support to small groups of students (in both in-person or hybrid model) and
- Monitor and support students through distance learning through regular virtual one-on-one and small group check-ins with students.

Can a cooperating teacher or supervisor “virtually supervise” a student teacher, who is providing in-person instruction?

Yes, virtual supervision allows a cooperating teacher to provide the candidates with needed feedback and observation.

Additionally, if a cooperating teacher is virtually supervising a classroom, then the district is not required to seek a separate licensed teacher or substitute to oversee the classroom.

Can student teachers be paid?

Yes!

NOTE: Teacher preparation providers may have policies preventing student teachers from serving as a substitute or teacher of record or being left alone with students. Therefore, student teachers are advised to connect with their teacher preparation provider to discuss their options.