Cross-Subject Matter Mentor Meetings
A special opportunity to explore critical issues associated with mentoring is available in the next several weeks. Based on the semester mentor meetings and as a result of other efforts in several subject matters, issues that cut across subject matter boundaries have surfaced. We would like to explore these issues with interested mentors in a series of three cross-subject matter meetings. At these meetings we will discuss issues such as developing productive mentor-intern relationships in the lead teaching period, assessing student writing and intern’s teaching of writing, and assisting interns to access and build professional resources. We also want to use these sessions as opportunities to explore areas in which you as a group have an interest. The three meeting dates are:

Friday, February 24 (morning)
Tuesday, March 21 (afternoon)
Thursday, April 13

All meetings will be held off-campus, but in the Lansing area. Faculty leaders and staff associated with the secondary program will be facilitating each session. We have obtained funding to cover the cost of sub-pay and to reimburse you for mileage. We will offer a light breakfast or lunch, as appropriate. If you are able to attend these sessions, please RSVP as soon as possible to Paul Kurf (kurf@msu.edu; 517-355-1726) and leave your contact information with him as well.

“Teaching Selected Students Better”
The "teaching selected students better" project in TE 803 serves the ideal of making knowledge accessible to all pupils or, in other terms, leaving no child behind. It proceeds by trying to help interns to teach a few selected students a little better. Both field instructors and mentor teachers can be helpful to the interns in carrying it out.

In this project, an intern selects one class that s/he is teaching, one unit that s/he will be teaching to that class, and 2-4 students in the class who appear to need particular or different attention. The intern then attempts to get useful information about the students, think carefully about what might be going on with them, and find specific ways to teach the students somewhat differently and better than they have done to date. When the unit has been taught and results are in, the intern evaluates her/his attempt.

The thinking and the action are reported in a written case, which pretty much follows the outline of work given above. In rating the case, instructors try to value evidence, reasoning, intelligent use of relevant professional literature, thoughtful consideration of alternatives for thinking about and working with students, practical craftsmanship, and honest self-evaluation.

Tom Bird is the leader of intern course TE 803 and designer of this project.
Mid-Semester Conferences
Field instructors will be scheduling mid-semester conferences for the period between February 13th and February 24th. Instead of the assessment grid, field instructors and mentor teachers should each bring a first draft of the Exit Performance Description to this conference. In this way, each will have a head start in preparing this final report. You will also be communicating clearly to the intern the areas where improvement is expected before the end of lead teaching. Please refer to the following section of this newsletter and to pages 28-29 of the MSU Handbook for additional information on Exit Performance Descriptions.

At the mid-semester conference, interns should bring drafts of materials that they are thinking of including in their portfolios, such as philosophy statements, examples of teaching materials, and student work. Interns can use these entries to reflect on their learning to teach, and to discuss what additional work needs to be done on the portfolios. This is also a good chance to talk with interns both about how they want to present themselves as teachers and about what improvements they need to make to honestly claim that their presentations are accurate.

Exit Performance Descriptions
Exit Performance Descriptions (EPDs) are the final intern evaluations, written in narrative form, that reflect interns’ progress in learning to teach. The opening paragraph should describe the school and the intern’s teaching assignment, followed by paragraphs on each of the four program standards (see page 18 in the MSU Handbook). This format can vary, as long as each program standard is addressed. Interns use the final form of this document as an important piece of their job searches. In fact, teachers and principals consistently report that the mentors’ EPDs are the most important single piece of evidence that they look at in evaluating candidates for teaching positions.

As you prepare a draft of the EPD for the mid-semester conference, consider the following:

- Although we like to say positive things about our interns, the EPD is an evaluation, not a letter of recommendation. There are a variety of ways of being tactful but remaining truthful in describing problem areas.

- Think of the EPD as a narrative about the intern’s progress.

- Try to make this rough draft an accurate description of where the intern is now and a text about substantive issues in the intern’s teaching. The text is still open to negotiation and change depending on future developments.

- Look at examples of EPDs and discuss what qualities of writing make them effective descriptions. Note, for example, the importance of concrete examples from the intern’s practice.

- Think about providing openings at the conference to say "I want to say this," but I need to see it first.
It’s a good idea for field instructors and mentors to exchange and discuss EPD drafts before the mid-semester conference. This way, you can work to resolve possible differences in perceptions about interns. However, if differences persist, the EPDs of the field instructor and mentor can be substantively different.

**EPD Materials**

EPD materials include a worksheet, how words that you may use in writing an EPD are commonly perceived, and samples of EPDs written about outstanding interns and less effective interns across subject matter areas. These materials are available on the secondary team website, which is located at:

http://ed-web2.educ.msu.edu/team4/

Look for the “EPDs (Materials and Information)” link on the left side of the page. Also, the spring mentor meetings will include this topic as part of their agendas.

**Dates for Spring Mentor Meetings**

**Lansing and Grand Rapids areas:**

- **English:** Tuesday, March 21, 8:30-11:00  
  Holt High School
- **Mathematics:** Monday, March 13, afternoon  
  Holt High School
- **Science:** Thursday, February 23, 9:00 – 11:00  
  Dwight Rich Middle School (Social Room)
- **Social Studies:** Tuesday, March 21, 8:30-11:00  
  Holt High School
- **Foreign Language:** TBA

**Detroit area,** all subject matters: TBA

**Important Spring Dates**

- **Window for Lead Teaching:** January 23-March 31
- **Teacher Certification Meeting:** February 3, 1:30, Erickson Kiva
- **Window for Mid-Semester Conferences:** February 13-24
  
  Construct draft EPD as assessment tool instead of using assessment grid
- **MEA Presentation, Law and Liability:** March 31, 1:00-3:00, Erickson Kiva
- **Interns’ Spring Break:** Interns follow the spring break schedule of their school placements, attending 3 out of 4 MSU classes in April. **INTERNS DO NOT FOLLOW MSU'S SPRING BREAK SCHEDULE.**
- **Window for Final Spring Conferences:** April 3-April 14
- **Teacher Fair:** April 3, 9:00-3:00 at the Lansing Center
- **Last Day in School for Interns:** April 27

**Convocation:** April 28, 2005, 4:00-6:30, Eli Broad College of Business

**Time for Celebration, Intern Presentations, Ceremony, Certificates of Completion**

Please plan on attending this important event!