Teaching Situation

During the 2003-2004 school year, [Redacted] taught Chemistry and Advanced Placement (AP) Biology at [Redacted] High School in [Redacted], Michigan. The school is located in an urban area and the students come from a wide variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. There are approximately [Redacted] students in grades 9 to 12 and the population is composed of approximately 45% minority students, including a large Hispanic community and a significant number of international refugee students. The students primarily come from working class families and a large percentage qualify for free and reduced lunch programs.

During the majority of the first semester, [Redacted] taught one chemistry class and assisted in two other classes on a regular basis. She assumed the lead teaching role in two chemistry classes and one AP biology class for a total of approximately three weeks. The chemistry classes were composed primarily of tenth and eleventh graders who are planning on continuing their formal education beyond the secondary level and initially ranged in size from 36 to 42 students. The AP biology class was composed of twenty eleventh and twelfth grade college bound students.

For the first ten weeks of the second semester, [Redacted] was the lead teacher for the above mentioned three classes as well as an additional AP biology class on a daily basis. She was also involved in the tutoring program for our athletes and assisted as needed with the Academic Decathlon team.

Subject Matter Teaching

[Redacted] began her internship year with a good chemistry background and could readily identify major themes and sequence specific objectives within the curriculum content. Although her specialty within the realm of biology was botany, she did not hesitate to spend time learning more about the animal systems content and finding additional sources for materials beyond the textbook at hand.

[Redacted] had learned about cooperative learning strategies during her college course work, but had little hands on experience with specific techniques prior to starting her internship year. After some initial frustrations, [Redacted] was able to design activities which balanced both the interactive advantages of student teams and the importance of individual contributions, tailored to the dynamics of individual classes.

[Redacted]'s organizational skills, which were strong to begin with, have been a great asset in assisting students in taking more responsibility for their own learning. This was clearly demonstrated to the students by the use of "unit plans" which she distributed to students at the beginning of each two or three week unit of study. These one page unit plans outlined the daily activities, listed the specific objectives and vocabulary, provided the students with a list of assignments for the unit including due dates and room for students to record grades, and served as a cover page for the unit notebook of assignments students were required to keep for each unit of material. This greatly facilitated classroom management because students who had been absent could readily determine what they had missed without disturbing the flow of the day's
activities. Although most students initially had some difficulty remembering to check the unit plan for assignment due dates on a regular basis, most students came to view them as a valuable tool for time management.

Classroom Management and Student Engagement

This is the area in which _____ has demonstrated the greatest growth during her internship. Although it was difficult for her initially to get certain students to focus on a specific task or deliver a presentation to some classes without multiple disruptions, she has been willing to continually try different techniques until she found what worked for individual students. This willingness to be flexible where appropriate and personal attention has resulted in a classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable and respected. She has developed a greater sense of confidence about disciplining students when necessary and has learned to anticipate where problems may occur, for example in transitions between activities, and take steps to avoid them.

A major concern in many science classes is the safe integration of laboratory experiences. _____ has prepared materials and supervised students in the laboratory on numerous occasions and is well aware of the need for continuous monitoring of safety conditions.

Professional Development and Relationships

Given the dual nature of the internship program through Michigan State University whereby the interns are both teachers and students at the same time, the demands of balancing the day to day teacher work load as well as substantial university assignments on a regular basis is difficult for all interns. _____ has handled this load well. She has attended staff meetings on a regular basis and participated in building staff development opportunities. _____ has participated in parent conferences, including one evening in which she was solely responsible for fielding all parent comments and concerns.

_____ has taken an active role at _____ this past year in “extra-curricular” activities. She has consistently demonstrated her willingness to help students outside of class by being available for students to drop in at lunch or after school to get additional help, finish assignments, or just to talk. She has attended student events outside the regular class day and has worked with the supplemental tutoring program for athletes established this year at _____.

Collaborating Teacher: _____