

SWOSU Prepares Cooperating Teachers for Arrival of Student Teachers

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SWOSU recently hosted a seminar for cooperating teachers who will serve as mentors for the 32 fall semester SWOSU student teachers. The seminar is held each semester prior to beginning the 12-week student teaching block to orient the cooperating teachers on the process. Cooperating teachers attending the seminar included (from left): Mona Reagan, Hollis 3rd grade; Amy Ingram, Clinton Nance Elementary 1st grade; Bruce Belanger, SWOSU; Rhonda Resendez, Clinton Washington Elementary 5/6 grade; Tracy Henry, Arapaho-Butler Junior/Senior High School; and Dawn Keller, Arapaho-Butler Elementary. Attending via interactive TV was LaJeanna Hoyle, Hobart 3rd grade. Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Department of Education in Weatherford will be working with 46 cooperating teachers from 34 different schools this fall as SWOSU student teachers do their practice teaching assignments throughout western Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, Stillwater and even one in Missouri.

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Bruce Belanger, coordinator of student teaching and field experiences at SWOSU, said sometimes there are teachers who have never had a student teacher or not served as a mentor in several years. So, the seminar provides a chance to explain in person the evaluation tools, the timeframe, expectations and challenges.

According to Belanger, the student teachers themselves mostly drive the decision on the location at which they decide to student teach. The university does encourage them to stay fairly close to the SWOSU campus to keep supervision costs to a minimum. But, sometimes life circumstances are such that they need the experience to be further away and the university will work with a student.

Ruth Boyd, interim chair of the department, said typically a student teacher has one cooperating teacher for the entire 12-week period. But, if a student is becoming certified to teach in an area that covers both elementary and secondary levels such as music, physical education and special education, then that student is required to have experiences at both levels. These teacher candidates will have multiple cooperating teachers.

Cooperating teachers not only receive the rewarding experience of helping to mold and train a new teacher but they also receive half-price SWOSU tuition for a two-year period and a free annual pass to all SWOSU events.

If teachers are interested in being a cooperating teacher for this process in the future, contact Belanger at 580.774.3146 or bruce.belanger@swosu.edu.