Preparing for your Practicum

Even if you are just beginning the school library program, it is not too early to start thinking about your practicum. This four-credit course, an application of what you have learned in your coursework, is taken at the end of the program prior to the portfolio course. Some students choose to take the practicum simultaneously with the portfolio course but the two courses taken together are a heavy load.

There are two practicum courses offered. SLM 552 is for those students who are not practicing school librarians. The course is completed under the direction of a school based mentor librarian and a college supervisor. Aside from the required 99 hours, student interns work on four assignments, reflect on their experiences through a learning log and perform a myriad of library tasks. Students who are not certified teachers must spend 40 hours teaching in the library setting as well as completing the other assignments.

SLM 553, the second course offered, is designed for those students who are presently employed as school librarians. Although there are similar assignments, the 553 intern works under the close direction of a college supervisor and has no hour requirement.

By far, the biggest question always concerns the time involved in doing the practicum. Ideally a student should take off as much time as possible and complete the process in a school other than the one in which he/she is employed. For many students, however, that is an economic impossibility. The college, therefore, allows interns to spend planning time or other free time working under the supervision of the librarian in the building. Keep in mind that placement decisions in Maryland are made by the county supervisor so don’t assume that working in your own building will necessarily be approved. It is a good idea for you to contact the library supervisor after taking several courses to talk about options and to introduce yourself before you start applying for a position.

If the required hours are not achieved or assignments not completed by an intern during one semester, the student has the option of taking an IP (in progress) and continuing into the next semester. Once the hours and requirements are finished, the practicum coordinator will file a form changing the IP to a letter grade. There is no extra charge to extend the practicum over two semesters and no need to register more than once.

Before you register for your practicum, you should e-mail the program or practicum coordinator to determine your eligibility for the course. It is preferable that every course in the program be completed before the practicum begins.

The practicum course is offered during every fall and spring semester. The only exception is Montgomery County students who complete the course during the summer. All students fill out the practicum application found on this page with the exception of Montgomery County students who complete the 440-12 Student Teacher pdf form and a resume. These items should be e-mailed to the practicum coordinator. Deadlines are November 1st for spring and March 1st for summer and fall semesters.

During the practicum, you meet face to face at the college for two sessions. The meetings are at the beginning and end of the semester on Saturday mornings.