The Practicum Learning Process
Seton Montessori Institute student teachers are expected to observe and assimilate the supervising teacher’s personal interpretation of the Montessori Method, as it is implemented in her/his class. During academics, when presentations of materials are made, it is stressed to the student that there can be more than one acceptable method for presenting a material, and that it is important for the adults within a class to be consistent in their approach. During academics, student teachers are directed to follow the direction of their supervising teacher while working in his/her classroom. The learning process for the student involves assimilating different approaches to presenting and classroom management to has been exposed, and evolving her own classroom leadership style. Student teachers are often full of questions as they examine different methods, and they appreciate the opportunity to discuss and share what they are learning. The student teacher is expected to share in all the duties of planning and cleaning the environment. Gradually, over the course of the practicum, the student needs to be introduced to planning and making of materials, individual and small group presentations in the different areas, the line, record keeping, etc. Attendance at parent conferences, staff meetings, and participation at all school functions is an integral part of the student teaching experience. It is up to the supervising teacher to decide how the introduction to these different responsibilities and experiences will unfold, ideally with input from the student teacher.

Practicum Hours
The Elementary practicum lasts a minimum of a full academic year, with the adult learner working at the practicum site consistently for a minimum of six hours a day, five days a week, during that period of time. The practicum consists of a minimum of 1080 hours. Practicum extends a minimum of one month beyond academic attendance (for Elem I extends to September 30th; and for Elementary I – II until after the final November seminar). For the Elementary I-II credential, the adult learner may intern in either an Elementary I or and Elementary II classroom. Internship in 9-12 classroom can only begin after 9-12 course work.

Students typically finish their practicum having given many more hours than the required minimum, because, in addition to actual classroom hours, it is expected that student teachers will take part in all aspects of the life of the school, including staff and parent meetings, preparation of the environment and special school events. A student teacher’s designated practicum hours are established on the Practicum Agreement form that must be submitted to Seton before the practicum can begin. A record of actual daily hours should be kept by the
student on the monthly *Practicum Time Sheet*, which he/she submits to Seton, along with his/her daily classroom observations, after you have reviewed and initialed them. Observations and timesheets are to be submitted to Seton Montessori Institute on a monthly basis. *If there is a change in the designated practicum hours, or in some other agreed upon aspect of the practicum, the student needs to inform the Seton practicum coordinator in writing immediately.*

**Assignments**

During the practicum, Elementary students are required to keep daily observation notes and to participate in their class’s Discussion Board. Observation notes can be a useful focus for communication between student and supervising teacher. The monthly questions given to students for response on the Discussion Board provide a focus for observation and study during the practicum experience. The supervising teacher should review the student’s observation notes regularly. We recommend that time be allowed for weekly discussions of the student’s observations and performance. Beyond this, student teachers are responsible for completion of a number of other assignments prior to certification. They may appreciate your consultation as they work on assignments, but please feel free to direct them back to their advisors at Seton if they seem to be in need of more help than you feel comfortable giving. Student assignment work is not the responsibility of the supervising teacher.

**Field Supervisor Visits**

Seton Montessori Institute will send field visitors to observe the student teacher three times prior to certification. When the visitor has been assigned, he or she will make a contact to schedule the visit. In most cases visits will include classroom observation for a minimum of 1 ½ hours, followed by a meeting with the student.

The field visitor’s primary function is as a consultant to the student. It is not mandatory that the field visitor and supervising teacher have a formal meeting as part of the visit, but our visitor are available to meet briefly with supervising teachers and appreciate receiving their input and questions. If the supervising teacher has any concerns that she would like to have addressed, it is best to contact our practicum coordinator directly, by email or phone, prior to the visit. Once the visit is scheduled, it is helpful if the school team arranges for coverage for the student teacher so that she can meet with the field visitor after the observation has taken place.
Elementary Practicum Guidelines
for Student and Supervising Teacher

The job of the field visitor, especially during the first and second visits, is to consult with the student teacher on her progress and development in the practicum setting and give any help needed in relation to assignment work.

The third visit differs from the first and second visit because it includes an evaluation component. The third visit is scheduled, with input from the student teacher, when she is close to completion of all requirements for certification, and when she indicates that she feels ready. On the day of the third visit, the student teacher is expected to demonstrate leadership of the class, with or without the presence of the supervising teacher in the environment, depending on circumstances. Third visits are sometimes scheduled as the nine-month practicum draws to a close, but they also can be scheduled during the following year, depending on the readiness of the student teacher.

Supervising Teacher's Assessment of Student Teacher
Twice during the practicum phase the supervising teacher will be asked to complete a report, analyzing with the student teacher her or his progress. The first of these reports is made after the fourth month of the practicum. The second report is made at the conclusion of the practicum and asks the supervising teacher for a recommendation of whether the student is ready for certification. These reports provide a natural time for supervising teachers to assess and discuss professional growth with the student teacher. A copy of both reports must be submitted to the Seton Montessori Institute office in order for practicum requirements to have been met by the student. In the case of a self-directed practicum, the mentor will be responsible for completing these assessments.

Continuing Academic Seminars
Student teachers need to be allowed time off for the days when Seton Montessori Institute holds academic seminars and may need time in order to schedule for required observation assignments. The student is given a copy of the schedule for these days and will forward this information to the supervising teacher and school administrator. Dates of seminars are established well in advance to minimize any inconvenience to the class. Make sure you are aware of these days.

The supervising teacher is invited to all Seton academic sessions at no charge while a Seton student is in his/her class. Each year, in addition to the regular required academic sessions, we schedule one or two featured speakers on topics of special interest. These are sessions that we especially hope you, as a supervising teacher, will make use of, as opportunities for professional growth and networking.
Conclusions
Mentoring a new teacher during their student teaching can be a rewarding experience and a way of renewing one’s own enthusiasm and appreciation for the Montessori approach. Certainly it is an important contribution to the growth and continuation of Montessori education! As the practicum unfolds, please remember that we are here to support all aspects of your student teacher’s successful completion of certification, and that we believe a good practicum experience is essential to an effective preparation. We’re looking forward to working with you in this important endeavor!