

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Teacher Education Office
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Professionalism in Teaching

Professionalism may mean many different things in the school setting. It is reflected in your attire and your interactions with and behavior around students, other teachers, and parents. Although school districts may vary in some of their expectations, students representing IUP are expected to present themselves in a professional manner at all times during the student teaching experience. You have devoted a great deal of time and hard work to becoming an excellent teacher. Making wise choices about your professionalism is a choice individuals will make that will unquestionably affect your professional future.

Professionalism in Dress and Appearance:

- While you are student teaching you are a guest in the school and a representative of IUP. As such you should use good judgment in selecting clothing for the classroom. In most cases, men will be required to wear a shirt with a collar and a tie. Suit coats may not be required. Women should wear dresses, dress slacks, or skirts that are appropriate for the classroom. Clothes that are too short or revealing in any way are not appropriate choices in working in public schools. Neatness is always advantageous.
- All teacher candidates should remember that jeans and sneakers or athletic shoes are not considered professional by many school districts and will be deemed unacceptable in student teaching (unless it is the day of an outdoor field trip and your cooperating teacher has made the recommendation). It is also generally not acceptable to come to school without socks or hose. All teacher candidates need to be aware that although many items of clothing may be perfect for some occasions, they may still be unacceptable for schools that are usually more conservative than the university setting to which you are accustomed. When in doubt about your clothing choice, it is suggested that you should err on the side of caution and select a different outfit.
- In addition to clothing, professionalism in dress and appearance would also include appropriate personal grooming. Neatness is important and students are advised to strive to regularly present themselves in a neat and well-groomed way. Visible body piercing and tattoos may be a statement of your individuality and style, but it may also be considered a distraction in a classroom by many school districts. Students should keep in mind that school personnel (including your cooperating teacher and school administrators) have the right to expect you to be more conservative and remove or cover such adornments. Failure to do so could result in the school requesting that your placement in their classrooms be terminated due to the distracting nature of your appearance or non-compliance with its school dress code. It is advised that teacher candidates consider this before the first visit to the classroom and attempt to maintain a professional image throughout your experience. Teacher candidates should keep in mind that as teachers you are role models. The personal choices you make regarding your appearance may affect the perceptions of others and your professional future.

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Professionalism in Teaching (cont.)

Professionalism in Language:

- Throughout the teacher preparation program at IUP, you have been encouraged to use standard English avoid colloquialisms and slang so as to sound professional and serve as a model for the children you teach. The school district will likely expect you to maintain good habits of speech and use of language at all times. Both your cooperating teacher and university supervisor will be expecting to see the professional use of language during this capstone experience.

Professionalism in Behavior:

- Your behavior says a great deal about not only you as a teacher, but also you as a person. Your students, their parents, other teachers and school personnel will view and form opinions regarding your professionalism based not only on the way you dress and speak, but also the way you act. As a teacher, you have the responsibility of always considering your actions so that you offer appropriate and mature behavior for your students to model. You have both an educational and ethical responsibility to your students. All teacher candidates should review the section of this handbook devoted to ethical behavior and strive to always influence the students with whom you work in a most favorable and positive way.
- Each of you has been asked to sign a student teaching contract. This agreement acknowledges your commitment to professionalism and the availability of professional support from your cooperating teacher and university supervisor