

Rider University Lab Cluster

What is a lab cluster?

A cluster consists of four to five student teacher candidates working in the same school, each in a different classroom with a cooperating teacher. Cooperating teachers are essential members of the cluster. Working collaboratively, experienced and novice teachers converse, investigate and explore topics related to teaching and learning. A Rider University supervisor is assigned to the cluster and provides materials and resources based on the interests, needs and educational goals of the cluster. To enhance learning and productivity, the cluster functions as a professional learning community (PLC), utilizing the NJDOE model. With the support of school administrators, experienced and novice teachers meet regularly as a team, and when appropriate, observe each other at work in the classroom.

Collaborative Student/Cooperating Teacher

Student teacher candidates and cooperating teachers work closely in planning and implementing lessons, agreeing on who leads the lesson. The student teacher assumes the lead more often as the semester progresses. Co-planning and co-teaching foster rich discussion and enhance student learning.

The collaborative model promotes collaboration and collegial work between the student and cooperating teacher as well as with the other cooperating teachers in the cluster. The opportunity exists for group planning, peer observation, discussion and the exchange of best practice.

Cooperating teachers are considered part of the teacher preparation team with a direct link to the School of Education through the Rider supervisor. As a team member, the teachers' feedback is valued and influences the teacher preparation program.

Novice teachers benefit from interacting with a group of master teachers and seeing effective collaboration in action.

Students benefit when the classroom teacher stays involved in the classroom.

Having another teacher in the room, even a novice teacher, provides additional opportunities for individual attention, differentiated activities and group projects.