

## **Reflective Paper #2**

After accumulating some years of teaching experience, being a mentor is one of my greatest dreams as a preschool teacher. There are a few goals which I strive to achieve in my professional development as a mentor teacher. First and foremost, I will like to establish a close relationship with my protégés. In order to achieve this, I need to manage my time well and allocate a period of time to communicate with the teachers. Through close communications, I will be able to develop a deeper understanding about the protégés and their needs. As such, a close and trusting relationship will be built over time.

The next goal which I set for myself as a mentor is to pass on the passion and love for teaching to my protégés. Being a mentor, I am a role-model to other teachers and I am aware that I need to role-model positive discipline strategies, active interactions with children and enthusiasm in teaching. Drawing from my past teaching experiences, I observed a teacher who showed respect and love to children. The activities which she implemented were fun and enriching. Through observing her, she has ignited the passion and love for teaching in me. Therefore, as a mentor, I hope to pass on the spirit of teaching to other teachers as well.

As my mentor, I hope to give my fullest support to my protégés and enable them to advance in their professional development as a teacher. One of the ways to do so is to assist teachers in the development of their professional teaching portfolio. In our local context, we hardly have mentors in preschools guiding teachers in their teaching portfolio. I believe by helping teachers to develop their teaching portfolio, it will enable them to keep track of their own teaching progress and set goals for themselves.

Reflecting on my strengths as a teacher, I can identify a few areas which are discovered mostly during my work as a preschool teacher. I am a good manager of the classroom environment as I seek to make use of the environment as a teaching tool for children. As a teacher, I set up interactive boards which encourage children to manipulate with the

learning materials and I also set up a print-rich environment. Through which, children were actively engaged during their free time and they learnt a lot through the environment around them. For instance, I had children who went to the rhyme board and point to the words with their fingers as they read. The reason for doing so is because I am deeply inspired by one of the principles of Reggio Emilia which advocates for setting up an aesthetically pleasing environment for conducive learning.

Effective communication is also one of my fortes and through. As such, I was able to establish a good rapport with children as well as adults. I made use of every opportunity to communicate with children. For instance, during neighborhood walk, I will hold a different child each time and have a short conversation with the child during the walk. Through which, I got to know children and their family better. I also reached out to parents in communication formally as well as informally. Formal means of communication include writing letters to them and parent teacher meetings. Informal communication ways include talking to them whenever possible or giving them a ring. In addition, I also went to one of my student's house for a house visit and during which, I had additional opportunities to communicate with the mother and our friendship developed from there too.

Another strength which I possess as a teacher is that the lessons which I planned are hands-on and interactive. My philosophy as a teacher is to provide hands-on learning for children. Hence, I planned my lessons such that children can be actively engaged in the learning activities. For example, while learning about cars, children had the opportunity to wash toy cars and explore with the different materials which can be used for washing. Also, my lessons extended beyond class as there are many things in the environment which can be of learning value to children. Take for instance, I brought children around the neighborhood and they observed and drew cars during their observation. This has sparked my children's interests in learning more about cars.

Moving on, there are a few areas which need to be strengthened as an educator. I need to improve on my management and organizational skills. I feel that this is a very important area which I need to master if I were to advance in my career as a mentor or supervisor. This is as supported by Belln, Whitebook & Hnatiuk (1997), mentors are skilled in planning, organizing and managing work (p. 19). I need to learn to manage my time and work load well as I always find myself working long hours and ineffectively. In addition, sometimes, when the work load gets too heavy, I feel lost and thrown into a state of confusion.

Another area which needs buffing up is my problem-solving skills. During our lecture discussion, this point was reinforced as we agreed that mentors need to deal with all possible situations that cannot be found in the textbook. Having worked in a childcare for a year, I realize that there are many problems which we need to handle daily. Problems range from misbehaviors from children, colleagues conflicts to complaints from parents. Sometimes, I am at lost and panic when situations arise. Hence, I need to learn to stay calm, flexible and have the ability to think of possible ways to solve different problems.

Last but not least, as Belln, Whitebook & Hnatiuk (1997) mentioned, mentors need to be know the organizational structure, policies and procedures of the preschool well. I agree with this statement and feel that I need to be familiar with all this information well. As a teacher, other than teaching children, I need to know my organization well because there are always many enquiries from the public. If teachers are not able to handle such basic enquiries, it may leave a bad impression to others about the organization. Just as importantly, knowing the standard operating procedures well may also create a safe environment for children. For instance, during a Hand Foot and Mouth outbreak, I will know how to act immediately.

Concluding, being a good mentor takes many years of good teaching experience. Thus, as a teacher, I seek to do my best so that I can lay a good foundation to be exceptional mentor who is able to handle many roles and responsibilities well.

### References

Bellm, D., Whitebrook, M. & Hnatiuk, P. (1997). *The early childhood mentoring curriculum: A handbook for mentors*. Washington, DC: Center for Child Care Workforce.