

SLO IV. Professionalism

Students will understand professionalism by demonstrating knowledge, attitudes, and skills of those individuals who are committed to understanding and working with children and families. Communication (reading, writing, listening, computer and speaking skills), leadership, research, assessment and evaluation, and collaboration skills are mastered.

In August, 2012, you receive this note from one of your CHLD 495 group members about her new job:

"When I started working here in July, I was so excited to work with the previous Head Teacher. She seemed like a very passionate, caring, hardworking teacher. A month into the job, I have started to notice certain behaviors that make me really uncomfortable and sad. I can't believe the teacher I'm working with is doing certain things, especially since everyone in this center loves her and respects her. I am leaving the center feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically exhausted!

The Head Teacher basically treats me like a maid, because I'm doing all the cleaning, all the potties, all the supervising, while she just sits on the floor and uses her phone. I find myself multi-tasking every day. I am doing potties, getting snacks and getting lunch ready, putting the cots down/up, and supervising all 14 children all at once. If she does a messy activity or finishes potties, she leaves a big mess and doesn't clean it up. I am so embarrassed on how dirty the classroom is that I just clean it up since it is dangerous for the children and it looks really bad for parents to see. Her food/drinks are all over the classroom because she is constantly eating while she walks around the classroom. The classroom is really bad every day, and I am not sure how to tell her to clean since she is my superior.

When it comes to curriculum, I feel like I have no say in it. She does what she wants and asks me for ideas but they are never implemented. I tried to help her by doing two weeks' worth of curriculum but she threw my ideas away. If she does allow me to do an activity with the children she rushes me or doesn't offer me support so my activities are never completed. I always notice that she had a lot of paper work, so I have offered her my help but she refuses. She always leaves me supervising all 14 children by myself while she does things on the computer; sometimes she just leaves. Also, every time I give a suggestion or a tip she says that she has three years of experience working with two year olds so she knows more than I do. I don't know why she is like this towards me.

What breaks my heart the most is her interactions with some of the children. The more I work with her I notice she does a lot of yelling. She wants the children to

sit still and not make noise. If they act out in any way or make a mess, she yells at them in a very shaming way. She humiliates children by yelling at them in front of the other children and telling the children that he/she is a bad boy/girl. I notice that children are afraid of her and that they feel like they could not say no to her. For example, one of the children was not hungry and said all done and came to potty with me. As I was finished with him, the Head Teacher came and told him in a very firm voice that he needed to eat because he did not eat at all. The child couldn't even look at her or answer her; he just walked to his spot really slowly. As soon as she turned away, the child came up to me and told me that he was not hungry and wanted to sleep. I was so upset that I told him that if he was not hungry that it was okay and helped him to his bed."

Response:

I would say that I fully agree with her and that it is ridiculous that she is being treated that way, as well as the children. Children should not have to eat if they don't want, it is just our job to offer the food to them. No child should be shamed and humiliated or yelled at in a classroom environment. It can hurt a child's self esteem and make them feel very uncomfortable in the environment. Instead, teachers can speak in a firm voice when necessary. Also, it is usually a 5 to 1 or a 4 to 1 ratio in a classroom, but definitely not a 14 to 1 ratio as in this scenario. A 14 to 1 ratio is a very unsafe environment because no matter how skilled the teachers are, they can not possibly attend to that many children's needs, safety, and interests by themselves.

I would tell her that she is doing the best she could possibly do in this situation. She is cleaning the environment to keep the children safe, and she is

attending to their needs as much as she can. For example, when the child wanted to go to sleep she said it was okay, even though the other teacher was trying to force the child to eat. She is still remaining positive by asking the head teacher if she needs help with paperwork, and tries to help with the curriculum.

This scenario says a lot about leadership. It shows that she is way more of a leader than the head teacher. The head teacher is failing at her job because she is supposed to hold the most of a leadership role. The other teacher is at least being a positive leader and role model to the children. I think research needs to be conducted on further steps the teacher could do and who she could speak with about what is occurring in the classroom with the head teacher. She needs to be able to talk to the department, or at least someone above the head teacher. If that does not work than further action needs to be taken because this classroom is very unsafe for the children, and is not an effective learning environment.

Evaluation and assessment could be helpful here. Supervisors in the program could go in the classroom, or an observation booth to watch the classroom. It would be more useful to have an observation booth so that the head teacher would not be aware they are watching and change her behavior. By doing this, others in charge can see first-hand what is occurring, and determine what next steps to take. This goes hand in hand with collaboration. She needs to get more people

involved, and have her voice heard. If she does not talk to others about it, nothing will be fixed or helped.

I would say the next steps were what I just previously mentioned. She should talk to a person above the head teacher about what has been going on in the classroom. Hopefully after that someone will observe and evaluate the situation. The best advice I could offer would be to advocate for herself, and not to quit until her voice is heard. She is trying to be a good team member, but the head teacher is not being part of a team. She is either making her do all the responsibilities, or she will not let her help in certain situations, such as with the curriculum. The head teacher is not supporting her when she conducts activities with the children, and is creating a poor learning environment for both staff and children.

I learned this information from my experience working with children in the infant and toddler rooms on campus. I also learned this information from working with preschoolers off campus at an internship at Oak Street Preschool. Some of the solutions to this scenario would be apparent to anyone that she is being treated poorly, but some of the aspects I have learned from just being in the Child Development program. I have learned through classes and experience that respect, being a team player, and being professional are all key aspects in working with children and other staff members. I have applied this knowledge in real life

situations, such as when you are giving guidance to a child it is okay to use a firm tone when you need to really get your point across, especially when it is a dangerous situation. Also, I have been a snack teacher in various classrooms and we know not to force the children to eat, we just offer them the food on their plate.