



Kirkwood Community College

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Using 21st Century Strategies to Educate Heartland Early Childhood Paraeducators

Mentoring Cooperating Teachers

Definition

Activities that support cooperating teachers in their roles as off site educators of college students. These including handbooks, workshops, and discussions.

Rationale

Cooperating teachers play a critical role in the educating of Early Childhood Program college students. The mentoring experiences provide opportunities to:

- Clarify their roles and expectations
- Discuss common issues and concerns
- Describe what works and what doesn't
- Provide a structure for thanking teachers for their support

How we use mentoring activities

Mentoring is an ongoing process that includes evaluating the sites, day to day communication with cooperating teachers and specific workshops for cooperating teachers. These include:

- Providing a faculty handbook
- Regular college faculty visits
- Workshops – topics include:
 - Discussion of types of off-site experiences from observations, short service learning, to full semester practica
 - Evaluation mechanics and strategies
 - Communication issues
 - Highlighting examples of evidence-based practices for college students
 - Discussing dilemmas

Mentoring Teacher Resources available: www.kirkwood.edu/heartland

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DILEMMAS: In each situation, the students (Tara, Cathy and Doris) have been placed in your classroom as part of their Early Childhood Field Experience.

Timid Tara

Tara has been in your classroom for several weeks. She still sits and watches most of the time and doesn't seem to know how to initiate interactions. When the kids come up to her, she seems pleased and she talks with them.

She seems afraid of doing something wrong, so she waits for you to give her a specific instruction. When directed, Tara completes the task correctly, but then will sit down and wait for the next instruction.

Chatty Cathy

Cathy comes into the classroom like a whirlwind. She seems to know everybody and everything. Cathy talks constantly, on her cell phone, to the kids, to the parents, to the other staff members. The children seem to enjoy her.

Cathy is not interested in doing the dirty work such as bathroom duties. She regularly reminds you of her extensive experience in the field and tells you the "right way" to handle situations.

Dizzy Doris

Doris seems very well meaning and interested. The children seem to like her, but you have concerns because she comes in late, leaves early and occasionally forgets to call when she is absent.

Doris is not well organized and is often unprepared for leading activities. She "forgot" to give you advance copies of her lesson and didn't have time to discuss it in advance. She didn't follow your directions and used food in an art activity that was too complex for the children to follow.

1. What are the issues raised in the dilemma?
2. What dispositions are reflected in the dilemma?
3. How would you handle the situation?
4. How can you help the students improve their performance in your setting?



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