



Practicum Notes

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER IN PRACTICE:

Professional Development for Practicum Mentors

With the support of the Department of Community Services the College is pleased to offer a series of reoccurring mentoring workshops to NSCECE practicum sites. These workshops are designed to support your work as mentors to colleagues and to students. The workshops are free of charge to staff of NSCECE practicum sites. Workshops being offered this fall are:

Effective Feedback and Communication Skills— Thursday, October 28th

This workshop will give participants an opportunity to think about, and practice good communication techniques. Participants will also learn

about the role of feedback in the adult learning and mentoring process and will have opportunities to practice giving feedback using feedback sce-

to say and how to say it.

Setting the Stage for Problem Solving—

Thursday, November 18th

In this workshop participants will be working with a problem solving framework described by the **Supervising with Style** project. Participants will learn how to set the stage; gain perspective; explore the problem; find solutions; and establish consequences for times when problem solving is not successful.



NSCECE Practicum Contact Teachers hard at work at our Recognition and PD day in March 2010

Workshops :

6:30—9:00 PM at NSCECE, 6208 Quinpool Rd. Call 423-7114 Ext. 227 to register.

narios common to the ECE workplace. Come to this workshop if you worry about what

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Important Dates:

Practicum I — M/Tu Placement

- September 27th— November 23rd
- Block Week:** October 25th — 29th

Practicum III — Th/F Placement

- September 23rd— November 19th
- Block Week:** October 18th—22nd

Learning at the College

First year students are taking many foundation courses this term. They are enrolled in **Observing and Recording** (ECE 111) and **Child Growth and Development** (ECE 101). These courses provide students with a framework for understanding young children. Students are challenged to

learn theories and develop a basic understanding of the science of child development while learning the skills that will help them form their own theories and understandings around the particular children they work with.

Second year students are taking **Children with Spe-**

cial Needs (ECE 306) and are also taking classes in administration, professionalism, etc. You may have a 2nd year student asking you to do a mock interview with them as part of their professionalism class. These students are also developing professional portfolios and personal philosophies.



**150 hours
20 days**

SUPPORT AND GUIDE COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS:

Mentoring as an Occupational Standard

Last spring the Child Care Sector Human Resource Council released an updated version of the Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators (<http://www.ccsc-cssge.ca/english/>). Knowing the work as you do you won't be surprised to discover that the task chart alone covers two pages. It's affirming to see the scope of our work recognized in this comprehensive way and I hope you will take some time to explore the link listed above.

The standards arrange the work of Early Childhood Educators into six sections consisting of various tasks and sub-tasks. In the section on professional relationships the task of mentoring others is identified as task D.2. The context statement for this task is as follows:

"Early Childhood Educators often act as mentors and informal advisors for fellow ECEs who are new to the profession, as well as for students of early childhood education programs completing their practicum placements. As mentors, they share their professional experiences, coach the practices of

those they are mentoring and guide others with positive attitudes, patient demeanours and open-minds. ECEs serve as resource persons, role model best practices and foster a positive regard to their profession." (p.81, 2010)



There are three sub-tasks identified under mentoring and each sub-task details required skills and abilities, and the core knowledge associated with the task.

I will be using the Occupational Standards a lot in the coming months and one of the ways I'll be using them is to help me create materials and professional development opportunities to support

you in your role as mentors and contact teachers for NSCECE practicum students.

During the Spring 2010 Recognition and PD day event we held for NSCECE practicum sites, 40 contact teachers filled in a needs assessment relating to their work mentoring our students. The needs assessment highlighted a strong interest in professional development opportunities related to many of the skills and abilities outlined in the Occupational Standards. Some of the similarities are listed below:

- Provide positive and constructive feedback
- Provide a welcoming environment
- Engage in active listening
- Facilitate self-evaluation
- Explain expectations
- Provide positive reinforcement
- Know quality standards and practices

You can expect to see a rotating roster of workshops targeting these and other skills in the coming months.

Goals of Practicum

1. Practicum is intended to help students progressively develop their skills and knowledge as they proceed through the practicum levels.
2. Practicum is intended to develop the student's knowledge of children through observation and interaction. At the same time, students are learning the introductory phases of planning and developing activities to support the optimal development of children.
3. Students are asked to prepare and implement activities under supervision. They are not expected to supervise children without support from site staff and are never counted in ratio.
4. A student's final practicum is an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to plan for and manage groups of children within a controlled environment.
5. NSCECE provides students with a foundation in the theory and performance of developmentally appropriate practice. Practicum experiences allow the student to construct his or her own practical knowledge and to make connections to the professional life of the field.

Dear Elly, My Student Won't Talk to Me



Dear Elly,
Help! I can't get my student to talk to me. She's fine with the children and even the other staff, but when I come close she disappears. I'm beginning to think I have B.O. or something.

Shunned

Dear Shunned,

Forget body odour--the children would have told you by now. Basically, the problem is that she's afraid of you. Yes, non-threatening, sensitive, supportive, open, you. What's happened is that as her contact teacher, you are an authority figure, and you represent all of the authorities she's encountered in her life. Remember how you felt about the school principal?

You may never become best-buddies with your student (and is that really what you want, anyway?) but if you continue to be friendly and supportive she may eventu-

ally see you as someone she can trust and talk to.

Think of this as a professional relationship that you can nurture by showing interest in her and sharing stories about your own career and practicum experiences. Successful mentoring is built on responsive interactions and reciprocal relationships.

NSCECE practicum students are asked to post a bio or introduction poster at their placement site. Students often share information you might not have thought to ask about. It's a great place to start a conversation. You may discover that you have commonalities and connections, or questions, that can help the student start to see you as a supportive colleague and mentor.

Elly

(Adapted from Dear Elly: on the *Supervising With Style Website*
<http://www.hcs.macewan.ca/e.cd/supervising/>)

Using Planning Sheets to Scaffold Thinking

Practicum students are in your classroom to learn all kinds of practical skills relating to the care and education of young children; everywhere they look they see examples of how things can be done. It's harder for students to see and appreciate why you've made the choices you've made, and to understand the thinking and intentions behind your work. Explaining the layers of thinking and consideration that go into your planning can be helpful. Thinking and reflecting out loud is also a great coaching tool.

Another tool that can help with this process are the activity planning sheets that the students use. The plan sheets give students an opportunity to practice thinking like intentional early childhood educators. Each step of the planning cycle is reflected on the planning form. The sheets have been designed as a tool to scaffold thinking.

You know, and we know, working ECEs don't write the whole planning process down — but successful ECEs do go through the thinking steps and do take time to record observations and reflect on the learning experiences they offer children.

By taking time to go over plan sheets with students prior to an activity you can ask the kind of questions and model kind of thinking that reinforces the planning process even more.

Students at the College are taught to base their planning on direct observations of the children they are planning for. They are asked to identify specific developmental goals that will be worked on during the activity and to consider the materials they will need to accomplish their plan.

The presentation of the activity is also planned; students are asked to clearly show how children will be invited to participate, how their engagement with the activity will be supported and sustained, and how the activity will be concluded.

Reflection and evaluation after the activity is perhaps the most important element of the planning process because it helps the student investigate his or her process and make future decisions based on their actual experience. The final step on the plan takes the students back to observation as they get ready to start the process again. In this way the learning cycle continues.

A final tool I'd like to share with you can be found on the last page of this newsletter. You can use this form to give specific and meaningful feedback to students that will help them with their reflections. The checklist focuses on elements of active, developmentally appropriate learning, and encourages students to use these strategies when planning activities.