



Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

Practicum Notes



Volume 1, Issue 6

Winter 2011

Being a NSCECE Practicum Site

There are currently over 40 early learning and childcare programs in HRM that partner with the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education by offering practicum placements for our students. It's an amazing gift of time, energy, and resources that demonstrates a belief in the future of our profession and the value of an educated workforce. Thank-you for working with our students; for giving them opportunities to learn and grow; and for fostering their professional development. Our affiliation with some

of these ECE programs has spanned a generation—forty years of working together. Other affiliations are much newer.



The College has added a number of new practicum sites in the past year due to our increasing enrolment and a desire to add to the variety of practicum experiences available

to our students.

Our hope is that the practicum process is enriching for everyone who participates. Practicum sites, students and the College benefit from our conversations about the work of early childhood education; recommended practices; challenges; and our journeys toward quality both on an individual and program level.

The College is inviting directors and other centre support staff to engage with us in a conversation about *Guiding Behaviour* on March 26th. See inside for details.

Learning at the College

The winter term is a busy one for students. First year students are investigating the elements of creating inclusive learning environments that support and welcome a diverse range of children and families. They are also looking at movement, active play and the role these play in wellbeing.

First year students are also learning about infant and toddler care, health and safety, and continuing to learn about approaches to developing curriculum.

Second year students are thinking about graduating and are focused on practicing their skills. They are taking Emergent Curricu-

lum, and Program Planning for Children with Special Needs.

Practicum for these second year students is much more intense than previously.

They are responsible for 18 activities over 20 days so they have to be organized and ready to take risks very early in the practicum.

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Important Dates:

Practicum II — M/Tu Placement

- January 17th—March 21st
- **Block Week:** Feb 21st—Feb 25th

Practicum IV — Th/F Placement

- January 14th—March 18th
- **Block Week:** Feb 14th—Feb 18th

150 hours
20 days

Free Workshop

Presenters Elizabeth Hicks and Carrie Melsom will share information and activities related to:

- The Occupational Standards for Guiding Behaviour
- Behaviour Guidance Policies
- Coaching and Mentoring staff and students

Includes catered lunch & door prizes. Call to reserve your space today!

Tel: 902-423-7114 Ext. 227
resourcecentre@nscece.ca

Practicum Site— Recognition and PD Day for Directors

Learning to Behave is a professional development day for Directors and their Assistants who provide leadership and support to staff and students at NSCECE practicum sites.

9:00 AM –3:30 PM
Saturday, March 26

**Nova Scotia College of Early
Childhood Education**
6208 Quinpool Road, 2nd
Floor, Halifax

The Director's Role in Guiding Behaviour

In every classroom, every day, teachers are making choices about how to respond to and guide children's behaviour. The choices they make profoundly affect the short and long term wellbeing and learning of the children enrolled in your programs.

Directors play a critical role in shaping childcare programs and in creating a quality early learning and childcare environment. The policies and practices directors put in place are created to support teachers in making daily choices that will lead to quality outcomes for children and families. Of course policies can only be useful tools for guiding behaviour if they are current, well understood, and regularly referred to.

The way early childhood educators talk about and understand child behaviour and recommended practices for guiding behaviour has changed significantly in the last twenty years—many of our policies and practices have not.

The College is inviting you to join Liz Hicks and Carrie Melsom in a conversation about behaviour guidance and the challenge of supporting teachers and students in meeting the Occupational Standards for Guiding Behaviour.

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 Help Me



Dear Elly,
My student isn't helpful. He doesn't see when things need to be done and doesn't help even when I'm pulling my hair out. Yesterday the kids were waiting for circle and I was too busy with a child to get started. He just sat there and watched as they got more and more out-of-control.

When I was a student I helped out. How do I get him to do what he's supposed to do?

Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,

Sounds like you were looking forward to having a student and it's not working out the way you expected. You haven't said how long the student has been with you or which practicum the student is enrolled in. Both of these factors will play a role in determining whether or not the student has the knowledge, skills or confidence to jump in when you need a hand.

Taking a moment to tell the student what is helpful can make a big difference when the student isn't sure what to do or doesn't feel comfortable taking initiative yet. Another option is to draw the student's attention to the problem, "The children are having a hard time waiting and I'm going to be a minute." This gives the student an opportunity to come up with a solution and try it out.

The key to getting a student involved in your classroom is to invite their participation, first working alongside you and then trying on their own. Specify how the student can help and check-in about his comfort level with various tasks. Ask open-ended questions to help you understand challenges so the two of you can come up with strategies for moving forward in a positive way.

Elly

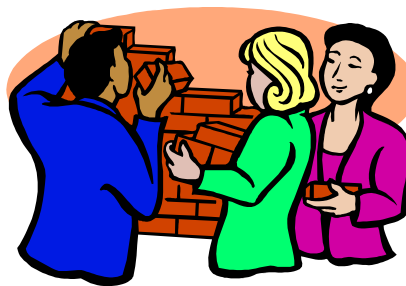
(Based on Dear Elly: from the *Supervising With Style Website*
<http://www.hcs.macewan.ca/e.cd/supervising/>)

Welcoming Your New Team Member

Remember the last time you started a new job. You were probably pretty nervous as you entered your new classroom. There was a lot to learn about; new children, new co-workers, and new ways of doing things—their way. Perhaps it was a new age group for you or a different approach to programming.

Very likely the "common sense" practices used to organize work and responsibilities in the classroom were pretty mysterious and you made mistakes as you tried to figure it all out. The responses of your new co-workers to these early mistakes would have made a big difference to how you settled in.

Remembering these types of experiences can be very helpful as we think about how to welcome and incorporate practicum students into our teams. The more successful we are at making practicum students part of the team the more positive their placement will be for everyone in the room. It may seem like it's not really worth the effort since practicums are over quickly but anyone who has had a negative experience with a student can tell you that even a short amount of time in a dysfunctional team can feel like forever.



Right from the beginning you can give the student simple tasks and invite them to work alongside you. This will help the student feel valued and useful without overwhelming her. It also gives you an opportunity to role model "how things are done here" and to talk to the student about why you do things the way you do. Remember to show appreciation for these early efforts and to give the student feedback that will keep her on the right track.

Working side-by-side also gives you a chance to really observe the student, identify his strengths, and ask questions about his goals and hopes for the practicum. This approach supports relationship building which is a foundation of good teamwork.

Take some time to debrief before the end of the day. Ask the student about the day and questions she might have. This is also a good time for you to reinforce expectations that you have and to make plans for tomorrow. Learning to work together takes time but the process will be much smoother if you and your co-workers make time early on to make new students feel part of your team.