

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A
REFLECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAM FOR EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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The Development And Implementation Of A
Reflective Mentoring Program
For Early Childhood Educators

by
Carmella Singleton, B.A. (Ed.); B.Sp.Ed

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

October 1997

St. John's

Newfoundland



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0-612-25887-4

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Abstract

The provincial colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador that offer Early Childhood Education Programs do not include formal mentoring opportunities for early childhood educators and students. Such a program would provide opportunities for the mentors and mentees to reflect on their teaching practices during the practical component of the program when mentees are assigned field placements in community and college child care centers.

The study was a qualitative case study that focused on the development and implementation of a formal reflective mentoring program for experienced early childhood educators and field placement students. It was anticipated that a formal reflective mentoring program which included opportunities for reflective practices would promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood education teaching practices.

Through the use of interviews, observations, conferences, and journal writing, the researcher determined effective mentoring strategies and skills that the experienced early childhood educators demonstrated with students to foster and promote reflective thinking in relation to meaningful and purposeful Early Childhood Education teaching practices.

The participants in the study were four early childhood educators (mentors), and four students (mentees). The educators were selected as mentors and were paired randomly with students (mentees) registered in an Early Childhood Education Program. The study was conducted in the child care center where the educators were employed,

which was the demonstration center for one of the provincial colleges.

The findings indicate there was an increase in the mentors' and mentees' understanding of the role of a mentor and the benefits of mentoring. As well, mentors and mentees identified coaching and modeling as effective mentoring strategies to assist and demonstrate early childhood teaching practices as they worked with children. In addition, the findings revealed the importance of conferencing and journal writing as mentoring strategies to promote reflective thinking in relation to meaningful and purposeful Early Childhood Education teaching practices. The findings also indicated that mentors must demonstrate sensitivity and encouragement to help create a non-threatening environment for themselves and mentees to think reflectively about their teaching practices.

Recommendations are made to the Colleges' advisory committees and instructors of Early Childhood Education Programs to strengthen the field placement component of Early Childhood Education Programs.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the people who have assisted in the completion of my thesis. I especially wish to thank my thesis supervisor and mentor, Dr. Elizabeth Strong, who helped to bring a focus to my work. Her knowledge, commitment, and sense of humour were the driving forces that ensured the completion of this work. Thank you to the mentors and mentees, who were committed to the development of a reflective mentoring program for Early Childhood Educators. I would also like to thank my family, especially my husband Brian and my son Derek for their support and understanding when I could not always be available to them during the completion of my thesis. This work was done as a result of my mother's inspiration during another part of my life. She laid the foundation that was necessary for this work to become a reality.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Background of the Study

In a number of Newfoundland and Labrador provincial colleges, an Early Childhood Education Diploma Program is offered to interested individuals who have completed their high school education. The program is comprised of two major components. One is theoretical-based and the other is practical-based. The nature of this research study focused, however, on the practical-based component of the Early Childhood Education Program.

Presently, when students embark on the practical-based component of their Early Childhood Education Program, they are assigned field placements in college and community child care centers. During field placement, the students engage in a variety of activities such as observing young children and facilitating their learning. In addition, they plan, initiate, implement, and evaluate a wide variety of developmentally appropriate materials and activities for individual and groups of children. While the students are involved in their field placements, early childhood educators provide informal support for them by providing encouragement and feedback about their teaching performance.

Recent research studies (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Whitebook & Sakai, 1995) indicate, however, that if the practical component of the Early Childhood Education Program is to ensure meaningful and purposeful preservice experiences and, hopefully, assure successful future early childhood educators, then it is crucial that it include

opportunities for the students to reflect, in a formal manner, on their teaching experiences. Bey (1992) maintains that if a formal reflective program is to be successful, it must include strategies that will encourage reflective practices for early childhood educators and students. Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, and McLaughlin (1990) believe that when experienced educators model and coach appropriate teaching strategies and provide reflective feedback to students, they are both encouraged to become reflective thinkers. A formal reflective program of this nature, according to Wheeler (1989) provides early childhood education students a more stable field experience, more specific feedback and a more positive affective experience than an informal field placement program. Without formal training, early childhood educators often tend to dominate feedback sessions with directions and procedural issues as opposed to reflecting and analysing the students' field placement experiences.

In addition, the program must be designed to meet many specific needs of students as they experience the numerous early childhood activities and events during their field placement. According to Gold (1992), these needs may be categorized in three groups: (1) emotional-physical, (2) psychosocial, and (3) personal-intellectual. The emotional-physical category includes such needs as, self-esteem, self-confidence, acceptance and security; the psycho-social category includes such needs as friendships and collegiality; and the personal-intellectual category focuses on such needs as, intellectual stimulation, new ideas/knowledge and challenges (pp.25-34).

Odell (1990b) claims that the students' needs can be met if relevant program goals are implemented in the preservice stage of teacher development. When these goals include opportunities for students to analyse and reflect on their teaching in an emotionally supportive environment, a foundation is built so that students become autonomous and confident thinkers. Positive feedback, understanding, and transmission of positive attitudes enable the students to feel more competent throughout field placement.

If early childhood education students experience a formal, supportive, and supervisory program during their field placement experience, Jones (1993) believes that when they become early childhood educators in child care centers, they will implement the same or expanded programs for their early childhood education students. She maintains that a domino effect would happen. This would be most beneficial, in particular, to young children, since studies indicate that the training of teachers working in early childhood settings is directly related to the quality of child care provided and the positive development of the children involved (NAEYC, 1991). An enriched, formal field placement program for early childhood students, therefore, can only enhance the quality of child care the students will provide when they become educators.

A formal program that would include the above elements, as well as other elements, would be a mentoring program (McIntyre & O'Hair, 1996). Through such a program, early childhood educators would provide a model for their students by encouraging strategies, such as reflective practices related to the students' work with

young children and their families, formal and informal observational skills, and meaningful and purposeful feedback. In addition, professional relationships would be established that would ensure the early childhood education students that as they enter their working world with young children, they would have a mentor to support and guide them whenever needed.

Presently, the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial colleges' early childhood education instructors strive to improve supports for early childhood education students throughout the theoretical component of their diploma program. As well, the early childhood educators in child care centers continue to provide informal support and guidance to the students throughout the practical component of their diploma program. However, the need for a formal, supportive, and supervisory program in the practical component of students' diploma program is essential to their success as beginning early childhood educators.

Statement of the Problem

In the provincial colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador where an Early Childhood Education Program is available, students train for two years to obtain a diploma in Early Childhood Education. This training includes four field placements in licensed community child care centers for a total of twelve weeks. In addition, students spend approximately two hundred and forty-five (245) hours visiting and observing children and educators at the colleges' early childhood demonstration centers. The

training, however, does not provide any formal opportunities for the students to reflect on their practical teaching experiences during field placement. Yet, formal opportunities to reflect on their teaching practices would promote professional, supportive, and supervisory relationships with early childhood educators during this time.

Although the colleges' early childhood education instructors generally organize an orientation meeting for early childhood educators who informally guide students during their field placement, limited time is provided at the meeting to discuss the importance of mentoring and how to mentor or how to establish a professional supportive relationship between educator and student. This is understandable, however, since the current practical component of the Early Childhood Education Program does not have a process in place to train early childhood educators in any formal way to develop mentoring strategies that would promote reflective practices during the students' field placements.

The Purpose of the Study

Early childhood education students are assigned field placements in community and college child care centers for the practical component of their program. During this time, early childhood educators are assigned as field placement supervisors to the students as they provide informal support and guidance. The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a reflective mentoring program for experienced early childhood educators that provided opportunities for them and their students to reflect on their

teaching practices.

Definition of Key Terms

This section contains a brief description of specific terms used in the context of this thesis.

Demonstration center refers to the college child care center. This center is part of the Early Childhood Education Program.

Early childhood education instructor refers to a person who is a faculty member of an early childhood education program.

Early childhood education student refers to a student enrolled in an early childhood education program.

Early childhood educator refers to a person who has received a degree, diploma, or certificate in early childhood education and teaches in a child care center.

Field placement refers to the practical component of an early childhood education training program. This placement occurs in community and college child care centers.

Mentee refers to an early childhood education student who is being mentored during field placement.

Mentor refers to an early childhood educator who mentors early childhood education students during field placement.

Reflective journal writing refers to a mentoring strategy that promotes written reflections related to early childhood education teaching practices.

Reflective listening refers to a communication skill that fosters reflective thinking related to early childhood education teaching practices.

Reflective opportunities refers to two specific mentoring strategies: conferencing and journal writing that promote reflective thinking related to teaching practices.

Reflective questions refers to questions which prompt and promote reflective thinking.

Reflective speaking refers to a communication skill that fosters reflective thinking related to early childhood education teaching practices.

Limitations

Since the nature of this study was ethnographic, one of its limitations was the generalizability of the findings and conclusions to other colleges' Early Childhood Education Programs. This study was intended to explore the development and implementation of a reflective mentoring program in a particular child care center affiliated with a particular college, involving specific early childhood educators and students. Although the context would be similar in other settings of this nature, differences would exist because each context is unique.

A second limitation was the investigator's dependency on observational data as one form of data collection. The investigator was aware that distortions may exist because of personal affinities for specific types of data, as well as the investigator's theoretical knowledge related to mentoring. In addition, the physical impossibility of the investigator to see and hear all that occurred in the setting may have caused distortions.

To reduce this limitation, the investigator observed the mentors and mentees 236 times over 12 weeks, in multiple ways. The data was cross-checked through triangulation with the researcher's notes and audio tape transcriptions of mentor and mentee interviews, before and after the study; the researcher's descriptive field notes of observations of mentor and mentee pairs working with children; the researcher's notes and audio tape transcriptions of daily conferences with each mentor and mentee pair; and mentor and mentee journal writings.

A third limitation was the investigator's presence as a participant observer. This presence, no doubt, influenced the context, the mentors, and the mentees. However, since the investigator was manager of the child care center where the study was conducted and was a colleague of the mentors and mentees, this minimized the limitation.

Summary

Newfoundland and Labrador provincial colleges that provide Early Childhood Education training programs for early childhood education students currently include several field placement experiences for students in college and community child care centers as part of the practical component of the program. Although many early childhood educators are responsible for students in their child care centers during this time, the majority have few resources upon which to develop the field placement learning experience in a formal manner. During field placement practices, early childhood educators work informally at providing a context of facilitative and supportive guidance

strategies which encourage students to reflect and consider alternative ways of teaching. Although there is significant goodwill and intention in working with students, little exists in the way of a formal guiding framework for this practical component of the early childhood education training program.

Early childhood educators have expressed an interest in developing strategies and skills to improve their support and guidance of students during field placement. They maintain the introduction of a formal reflective mentoring program for educators and students would assist in the development of such strategies and skills. Mentoring has the potential to provide the necessary formal professional supports for experienced early childhood educators and influence the quality of early childhood education programs that students are introduced to during field placement. A mentoring model, which includes students in training, constitutes a promising approach to building a more skilled child care work force beginning at the preservice level.

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study. It has included the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definition of key terms, and limitations of the study. Chapter II will review the related literature focusing on a definition of mentoring, mentor characteristics, mentoring styles, and the benefits of mentoring for mentors and mentees. It will also include a review of mentoring and reflective practices, such as conferences and journal writing. Chapter III will provide a detailed account of the methods and procedures by which the study was conducted. Chapter IV will identify the mentoring strategies that promote reflective

practices which were identified during the data analysis. Finally, Chapter V will summarize the findings and will suggest future research directions.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Providing quality practical training experiences for students who are preparing to become early childhood educators in the 90s presents many challenges to colleges and universities throughout the country. Recent research studies indicate that if these practical training events, referred to as field placements, are to ensure quality experiences for students, then it is crucial to provide support and training to early childhood educators, who are field placement supervisors, on how to guide formally students (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Whitebook & Sakai, 1995). This support and training will ensure that field placement supervisors are qualified and empowered to formally support and guide students during this critical time. Support and training of this nature have the potential to address many of the challenges that face Early Childhood Education Programs throughout the country. This form of support and training is often referred to throughout the literature as mentoring.

A mentor program that includes opportunities for experienced early childhood educators and students to reflect upon and analyse the students' field placement experiences and establish professional relationships is a promising and innovative approach that has the potential to enhance preservice training programs. Mentoring programs present a unique way of understanding and meeting the needs of preservice students (mentees) and experienced early childhood educators (mentors).

The importance of establishing mentoring programs for beginning teachers within the K-12 education system is well documented in the literature (Bey & Holmes, 1990; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Killion, 1990; Wilkin, 1992) and, quite recently, has also been explored in Early Childhood Education Programs (Whitebook & Sakai, 1995). In fact, throughout the United States, one of the most promising professional development approaches for child care professionals is the creation of Early Childhood Education Mentoring Programs. These programs offer a model of on-the-job training and formal guidance and support that is often linked with improved quality child care, enhanced pre-service training, and increased compensation. Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, and Niles (1992) found that when excellent teachers work together to develop and implement quality mentoring programs like these, all participants benefit. In fact, they found that when mentoring programs were developed in a way that was unique to each individual setting, the mentoring relationships flourished.

This chapter examines the related literature on mentoring in teacher education with an emphasis on early childhood education. Specifically, this chapter focuses on a definition of mentoring, mentor characteristics, mentoring styles, benefits of mentoring for mentors and mentees, and mentoring and reflective practices, such as conferencing and journal writing.

Definition of Mentoring

The origin of the term mentor is found in Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey", when approximately 3,500 years ago, Odysseus gave the responsibility of nurturing his son Telemachus to his loyal friend Mentor. Mentor educated every aspect of Telemachus's life while Odysseus went off to fight the Trojan War. One of Mentor's goals was to guide Telemachus in such a way that he would learn from his own mistakes. Role modeling and empowerment were characteristics of mentoring during this time and continue to be today (Odell, 1990a).

Presently, the literature is abound with definitions of mentoring. However, to date, no commonly accepted meaning of the term has been developed. Several researchers (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Neal, 1992; Odell, 1990a) use a variety of expressions to define the word mentor, including: teacher, sponsor, host, counsellor, supporter, guru, support teacher, peer teacher, and advisor.

According to Anderson and Shannon (1988), mentoring is "a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development" (p.40). Similarly, Odell (1990a) refers to a mentor as an older, more experienced person who is committed to helping a younger, less experienced person become prepared for all aspects of life. In regard to early childhood education programs, however, Whitebook, Hnatiuk, & Bellm (1994) use the mentoring term to assume a specific meaning. Their definition of

an early childhood education mentor is one who is concerned not only with how children grow and learn, but in gaining skills to help other adults become more effective practitioners. For the purpose of this study, Whitebook et al's definition will be used.

Mentor Characteristics

According to Hardcastle and Kay (as cited in Enz,1992) and Odell (1990b), it is necessary for mentors to be wise, caring, humorous, nurturing, ethical, and committed to the profession. In addition, they found that mentors should model high expectations and demonstrate an ability to act as a catalyst for mentees. Other researchers noted that mentors must be viewed by mentees as persons of unquestionable personal and professional integrity and capable of establishing a mentor relationship built on mutual trust and respect (Enz,1992). Odell's study (as cited in Huling-Austin, 1990b) provides a similar list of characteristics as those noted in previously mentioned studies. In addition, she maintains that mentors should have successful teaching experiences. These experiences include: demonstrated successes in working with adults, sensitivity and responsiveness to the ideas of others, and receptivity to learning new information about the process of teaching. Also, mentors need to demonstrate dispositions of openness, leadership and concern for their mentees (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

In a more recent study, Tellez (1992) found that mentors must, above all else, appear as friendly and caring. In fact, according to Enz (1992), the ultimate success of a mentor program hinges on the trust and rapport established early in the mentoring

relationship between mentors and mentees. Other researchers (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986; Wildman et al., 1992) had similar findings as these. They claim that the most significant characteristic that supported and maintained the mentor relationship was the willingness of the teacher to be a mentor. These findings support Gold's (1992) thinking that personal characteristics like these are instrumental in the success of the mentoring relationship, particularly when mentors guide mentees to identify their strengths and develop the necessary coping skills to address their needs. Gold also believes that these characteristics will enable mentees to become self-reliant as they participate in a planned program of psychological support. Other researchers (Enz, 1992; Gehrke, 1988; Head, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1992; Odell, 1990a; Odell, 1990b) support these findings and further assert that when mentors demonstrate these characteristics, there is a greater likelihood that successful mentor-mentee relationships will flourish.

Mentors also need to model exemplary teaching practices for mentees through guidance, advice, and support. When these practices are demonstrated for mentees in a reflective manner, Odell (1990b) believes that mentors can then perform their role with the greatest efficacy and sensitivity.

Recent research findings (Wilkin, 1992), relating specifically to mentoring pre-service students, indicate that in order for effective mentoring to occur with preservice students, mentors must participate fully in the planning of the students' training. Wilkin believes that if mentors are to appear authoritative and credible in their mentoring role they must be well informed of the details of the training program the students are

following. She specifically addresses the importance of the link between the theoretical and practical components of training and states that if mentors are not aware of the theory introduced during training, it is impossible for them to assist mentees to link theory to practice during their work with children in field placement. She insists that this knowledge base must be considered when developing a selection criteria for mentors.

With reference to mentor selection in an Early Childhood Education Mentor Program. Whitebook, Hnatiuk, & Bellm (1994) believe there are additional mentor characteristics that must be present. They maintain that mentors must have a sound background in early childhood education, a sound knowledge-based philosophy about what makes for high-quality child care, a minimum child care worker experience, excellent interpersonal skills for working with adults, and time to make a commitment to the mentoring program.

It is important then that mentors strive to have these, and other identified characteristics referred to previously in the text, in order for them to support and guide mentees during the mentoring relationship. Huling-Austin (1990b) believes that many of these characteristics are necessary prior to placing mentors with mentees in a mentor context.

Mentoring Styles

Huling-Austin (1990a) describes three styles of mentoring. Although these styles have not been explored in great detail, Huling-Austin suggests a strong relationship between mentoring style and degree of professional growth experienced by the mentor and mentee. A responding mentor is one style. Such a mentor encourages the mentee to ask for help and provides the necessary assistance when requested. This style limits the mentor to dealing only with immediate concerns. Collegiality refers to another mentoring style. A collegiality mentor frequently initiates informal visits with the mentee and provides assistance only upon request. A third is the initiating mentor style. A mentor, who mentors in this manner, goes beyond a particular teaching episode and guides the mentee to consider more elaborate concepts of teaching. The initiating mentor believes it is their responsibility to facilitate the professional growth of the mentee to the best of their ability, by providing spontaneous and requested assistance.

Huling-Austin (1990a) believes that although there is not one right way to mentor, the initiating style of mentoring provides additional opportunities for professional growth for both the mentor and mentee. A style such as this, where the mentor initiates assistance, does not depend on the mentee's current level of expertise or commitment. The mentor views this role as being critical to the mentee's professional development.

Although the responding mentor and the collegiality mentor styles have positive elements, it is important to note, however, that they are dependent on the mentee making the initial request for mentor assistance. Therefore, according to Huling-Austin,

choosing either one of these styles could result in a loss of mentoring opportunities and professional growth for mentors and mentees. On the contrary, she believes that when mentees are introduced to an initiating mentor style, not only will they experience professional growth and enhanced mentoring opportunities more quickly in their careers, but they are also more likely to adopt these mentoring skills and use them in their future professional relationships.

Odell (1990a) links the concept of mentor styles (Huling-Austin, 1990a) with strategies of mentoring. She promotes the idea of directive versus non-directive mentoring. Non-directive mentoring permits the mentee or novice teacher to figure things out independently without guidance, in much the same manner as the responding mentor style. She believes there is value in encouraging mentees to problem solve. However, she cautions that when mentees work through problems individually through self analysis and reflection, they may lose important opportunities for professional growth because they are missing the collegial component, which is instrumental for inexperienced teachers. They gain new perspectives as they communicate and reflect with an experienced teacher.

Odell (1990a) claims that initiating mentors are more likely to mentor with a directive strategy. She cautions that a directive strategy can become negative if the mentors believe that it is their role to tell the mentees how to teach, without discussion and reflection. This strategy has the potential to have a negative effect on the mentor and the mentee because they both miss the opportunity to reflect and discuss their teaching

practices in an open and collegial manner. Odell, therefore, promotes an interactive, peer coaching strategy, where mentors ask probing questions as they encourage their mentees to analyse and reflect on the questions and pose new questions as a result of the discussion. The result is a teacher-mentoring episode where the mentor and the mentee are thinking together about their teaching practices. Odell maintains that when mentors initiate mentor strategies with their mentees in an interactive manner, they are both being encouraged to become reflective thinkers.

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentors' Benefits

Successful mentors view their mentoring role as an opportunity for thoughtful reflection and personal growth, particularly when they describe and review their own practices for the purpose of mentoring student teachers. Contributing to their own profession and passing the torch to the next generation are benefits many mentors cite when describing their supportive role.

Research states several benefits for mentors. In a recent study of the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program, Whitebook and Sakai (1995) identified a number of mentor benefits. They found that mentors elaborated on the fact that the mentoring experience contributed to their professional development and enhanced their collegial experiences. In addition, they attributed a positive shift in their self image, an expanded view of their career options, and an increase in their advocacy skills.

Acceptance into the mentor program meant that they were formally recognized for their outstanding teaching skills. As a result of this formal recognition, they often engaged themselves in efforts to upgrade the field for all early childhood educators.

Other researchers had similar findings (Killion, 1990; Krupp, 1984; Odell, 1990a) in their studies of mentor benefits. Killion (1990) identified four significant outcomes for mentors: (1) professional growth, (2) recognition, (3) experience-enhancing roles, and (4) collegiality. She found that when mentors assisted mentees, mentors reflected on their own teaching practices and, as a result of this reflection, they were better able to define their personal teaching philosophy. Throughout the study mentors reported refining existing skills and developing additional ones as they took leadership roles in the professional development of their mentees.

In a more dated study, Krupp (1984) examined mentor and mentee perceptions of mentoring relationships in an elementary and secondary school. She found that as a group, mentors felt very positive about their roles. Specifically, mentors felt a sense of accomplishment because they had helped other persons. Through helping others, they empowered themselves to provide a rationale for their own teaching practices, and, as a result of this process, developed greater self-awareness and professional growth. Opportunities for reflection brought about a clearer understanding of their teaching practices and reinforced their professional identity.

Poelle (1993), in her study, was concerned about the lack of professional support for early childhood educators and the resulting high rate of turnover among staff. She

found that mentors had a renewed enthusiasm for their profession after the completion of a mentor training program. Mentoring had ensured professional growth for mentors as support networks were built with colleagues. After completion of mentor training, they perceived themselves to be risk takers as professional endeavours were rewarded and supported.

There has been a tendency for participants in a mentor program to view a learning experience like mentoring as being beneficial only to the mentees. These research findings, however, refute this thinking and confirm the fact that the mentoring process is beneficial to mentors as well as mentees. Experienced teachers have the potential to challenge the status quo as they mentor student teachers and attempt to meet their needs.

Mentees' Benefits

Gold (1992) and Waters and Bernhardt (1989) expressed concerns about the emphasis of current mentor programs on the professional benefits for mentees and the de-emphasis on the importance of the emotional benefits and support. These researchers believe that in a zeal to improve the teaching profession, emphasis is placed too heavily on professional benefits rather than the emotional and personal development of the mentee. These concerns are substantiated by other studies done by Wildman (as cited in Gold, 1992) who emphasizes the importance of selecting mentors with professional skills with no mention of qualifications that would enhance the emotional and social development of themselves and their mentee.

Gold (1992) believes that mentoring must benefit the overall needs of mentees. She maintains that benefits should address three categories: (1) emotional-physical, (2) psychosocial, and (3) personal-intellectual. In addition, she maintains that to address only the professional benefits of mentoring without a plan to deal effectively with the emotional benefits is setting the mentees up for failure. She asserts that if mentees are not assisted by a mentor trained in providing individualized emotional support they will not be capable of applying the skills learned during training. A support system which concentrates on the emotional dimensions of growth and development provides the necessary skills and support to help mentees cope with daily pressures in both their personal and professional lives. Gold maintains that in order for this type of support to be successful, the mentor and mentee must first establish a trusting relationship, communicate genuine feelings of acceptance, and develop appropriate communication and listening skills. Huling-Austin (1990b) believes that if desired program outcomes are to reach fruition, program activities specifically targeted at desired outcomes must be planned and implemented appropriately. Consequently, the knowledge that mentors have as a result of research findings about the importance and necessity of emotional support for mentees should provide the rationale for future mentor programs.

Enz (1992) emphasizes the need to base mentoring goals on the needs and concerns of mentees and that this should become the foundation for all efforts to benefit the mentees. This thinking will be instrumental in the development of objectives prior to

the implementation of mentor programs and will relate specifically to assisting mentees to identify their strengths and develop necessary coping skills to enhance self-reliance. This will ultimately provide the necessary foundation prior to implementing an emotional support program for mentees.

Several studies conducted by Adams, Hutchinson, and Martray; and Adams and Martray (as cited in Pigge & Marso, 1987) suggest that during training, student teachers' concerns change in relation to themselves, with little or no change in task concerns. Pigge & Marso (1987) conducted a study of preservice students throughout their teacher training to investigate changes in their anxiety, attitude, concerns, and confidence about becoming a teacher. They discovered that although anxiety and confidence about teaching showed positive changes, attitude toward teaching showed no overall change. In addition, they found that concerns about teaching tended to increase prior to student teaching, but decreased following student teaching. Findings like these imply that once student supports, such as those provided by mentors, are implemented during the first years of teaching, it might be likely that teachers' self-survival skills will decline much earlier and they will become mentors themselves earlier during their career.

In more recent studies of preservice students, Tabachnick and Clifton (as cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) examined the field placement experiences of teacher training programs for several years and found that "practice teaching is very much a question of survival in a marginal situation" (p.294). Soon after, Griffin (as cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) discovered there were several reasons why students

operated in this survival mode at that time. He found that during student teaching experiences, students tended to function in passive roles, experienced limited opportunities for innovative teaching experiences, and were isolated from extracurricular school activities. Other researchers, such as Hawk, Hidalgo, Huling-Austin and Murphy (as cited in Huling-Austin, 1990b) found that beginning teachers, following student teaching experiences like these, continued to lose self-confidence, experienced stress and anxiety, and questioned their own competence as teachers and people. They believed that the implementation of mentoring programs beginning with the preservice student and continuing on to the beginning teacher stage will assist with the personal and professional developmental well-being of these students and teachers, and will result in a more consistent teaching experience that will benefit students and teachers.

Mentoring and Reflective Practices

Reflective Practice

Researchers Goodman and Ross (as cited in Ross, D., 1990, p.98), and Zeichner and Liston (1987) define reflection as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices. Bellm, Whitebook, and Hnatiuk (1997) believe that this ability to reflect, and to take action on that reflection, is a mentoring strategy which requires significant risk taking. Reflecting on one's actions requires going past the zone where one is usually most comfortable. However, Bellm et al. believe that when mentors are able go beyond

that comfort zone and incorporate reflection into their professional lives, they are in fact demonstrating reflective practice. According to these researchers, reflective practices are encouraged in Early Childhood Education Programs when mentors put a structure in place to formally meet or conference with their mentee, and when opportunities are provided for mentors and mentees to observe one another's teaching practices. When educators, who are mentors, put structures like these in place, and allow themselves to develop from within, not only do they become reflective thinkers, but they are also enabled to coach their mentees to become reflective about their interactions with children and adults. Bellm et al. believe that reflective practices like these are mandatory to an effective mentoring program.

Much of the current thought and beliefs about reflective practice come from the teaching of John Dewey. Dewey (as cited in Canning, 1991) described reflection as "behaviour which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads" (p.18). Although the notion of reflective thinking is not a new idea, only a few researchers were using the term until Schon (1987) began to write about reflective practice in education and other professions (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). Currently, there are several researchers (Bellm et al, 1997; Borko, Livingston, McCaleb, Mauro, 1988; Field & Field, 1994) who believe in the importance of the critical and analytical thinking of mentors, often referred to as reflective thinking. In light of this, there are other researchers (Field et al., 1994; Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, & McLaughlin, 1990)

who believe that the ability to reflect formally on teaching practice must be taught. They claim that after formal training in reflective practices, teachers will then know how to stand back and observe objectively what they are experiencing, have experienced, or will experience in the future, prior to discussing it more meaningfully.

Wildman et al. (1990) believe that mentors are most effective in the context of reflective practice. They believe that in order for reflective practices to occur, mentors must critically analyse their own teaching experiences. Critical analysis or reflection of teaching practices is important to the mentors' professional growth and, in fact, Wildman et al. believe that growth is unlikely without it. They further state that reflection does not just happen, it requires activities and processes that will act as reflective motivators. They found that teachers in their study organized their reflective thinking around shared problems, mentoring episodes involving coaching and modeling, and self-analytic needs. Two strategies that promote reflective thinking related to teaching practices are conferencing and reflective journal writing. The following sections elaborate on these strategies.

Conferencing

Limited research exists regarding the value of conferences to promote mentors' reflective thinking skills. There is, however, research available that states the importance of training in reflective thinking prior to becoming a mentor. Wildman et al. (1990) believe that mentors are most effective in the context of reflective practice. They also

assert that when mentors model problem solving skills and provide feedback to novice teachers, they are promoting reflective thinking related to teaching practices. Conferencing becomes the strategy to promote reflective thinking in the novice teacher, as well as in the mentor.

During a study of field placement experiences, Richardson-Koehler (1988) found that when teachers were unwilling to engage in reflection of their own or their student teachers' teaching practices, the feedback given to students lacked quality. She found that in order for teachers to help student teachers understand the relationship between their behaviours and routines in a specific context, teachers must reflect on their own practices first. Other researchers believe that teachers must receive training in the analysis of their teaching practices prior to being expected to analyse others' teaching practices and further to this, if this training does not occur, teachers often revert to learning by experience. O'Neal and Edwards (as cited in Guyton & McIntyre, 1990) confirmed these findings.

Conferences are situations where the reflective process is embedded within the formal and informal supervision of student teachers. They take place when the mentee sits with the mentor to engage in reflective thinking that is related to teaching practices and student teaching experiences. After an analysis of conference dialogue, Grimmett, MacKinnon, Erickson, and Riecken (1990) found that there were certain conditions that accompanied instances of teacher reflection. They found that when teaching views were exchanged and feedback was regarded as a source of information to be evaluated

critically, reflective dialogue was promoted. In fact, they judged conference dialogue to be reflective only if it brought new insights on the teachers' practice and when it promoted the teachers' perception of being in control of their professional development.

Limited research exists on how conferences foster reflective thinking in relationship to mentors, research does show that in order for mentors to encourage mentees to reflect critically, mentors must be trained in strategies that promote critical analysis and reflection on their own teaching. Thies-Sprinthall (as cited in Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1993) found that encouraging careful and continuous guided reflections during the new role taking experience (mentor) was important to the mentors' growth and development. She believes that when teaching practices are left unexamined, mentors forfeit the potential for growth. Later, Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1993) conducted a study on promoting the development of mentor teachers by using guided reflection when practising supervisory conferences with a novice teacher. They explored the interaction between role taking and guided reflection and found that carefully guided reflection may be the key that is necessary to encourage the mentors' developmental growth during conferences, when the purpose of the conference is reflection.

Newton et al. (1994) believe that observation and conference skills provide an opportunity for mentors to practice the knowledge of how and what to engage their mentees in during discussion. It is through this process that the mentee is encouraged to reflect on his or her teaching. They believe that there must be a reciprocal opportunity to observe the mentor/mentee relationship and it is when this reciprocal model of

observation is followed by discussion, that both members of the mentor/mentee relationship become more reflective about their teaching practices.

Journal Writing

Research exists on the importance of journal writing for preservice students and beginning teachers as a mentoring strategy that encourages reflective thinking (Wedman & Martin, 1991; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). However, it is limited in light of its impact on mentors in the promotion of their reflective thinking. Newton et al (1994) believe that mentors and mentees could benefit greatly from journal writing but do not elaborate on how journal writing promotes reflective thinking in relationship to mentors. Oberg, and Oberg and Field (as cited in Grimmitt et al., 1990) reviewed the reflective writing of experienced teachers who were currently graduate students and found that reflection on their practical teaching experiences brought about changes in the students' thinking about their teaching practices. Through writing, they began to identify specific ways in which their teaching practices might become more consistent with their personal philosophy of teaching. Grimmitt et al. (1990) believe that it is through the use of writing as an exploration of one's teaching practices and the reflection on such writing that will promote reflective thinking in a teacher.

Research shows that reflective writing provides a way for preservice students to practice critical analysis and reasoning about their teaching practices. It also provides faculty with a means to challenge and support each student's reflective thinking, thereby

emphasizing writing as an important strategy for programs stressing reflection. According to researchers Copeland and Zeichner (as cited in Ross, 1990), journal writing is the most common form of writing to stimulate reflection. However, Copeland (as cited in Ross, 1990) found that journal writing only contributes to the development of reflection when students are taught techniques that will encourage reflective journal writing and when students receive meaningful feedback about the content of their entries. It is recommended that experienced teachers who are mentors must be knowledgeable about reflective journal writing prior to dialoguing with their mentees and promoting their reflective thinking. This will ensure that there will be a greater likelihood that both mentor and mentee will benefit from this experience and both members of the mentoring pair will become reflective practitioners.

Through an analysis of reflective journal writings by university supervisors who were supervising preservice students, Rust (1988) found differences between experienced and new supervisors' journal entries. These differences related to supervisory experiences and abilities to reflect on and talk about practice. Rust believes that the sharing of journals among supervisors will help to develop their reflective thinking. However, the new supervisors may also need guidance, possibly even a mentor, who will teach them how to read and respond to journals in a reflective manner. In addition to needing guidance with their journal writing , they also expressed a need for social interaction with novice and experienced supervisors to share and reflect on their work together and establish a collegial relationship.

According to Ross (1990), journal writing is an effective strategy that supports and challenges preservice students' reflective thinking. However, Rust (1988) believes that in order for this strategy to be effective, preservice students must be formally guided on the use of journal writing. Ross emphasizes the importance of mentors' understanding the students' ability to reflect on teaching practices, if they are to present appropriate challenges. Mentors must be skilled at reflecting on their own teaching practices before they can challenge the students' reflective thinking. Promoting the students' ability to progress in the development of reflective thinking requires mentors to respond to journal writing in ways that are slightly more advanced than the students' current level of reasoning. Journal writing among new and experienced mentors would enable new mentors to develop reflective thinking skills and in turn model and encourage these skills for student teachers.

Zeichner and Liston (1987) believed that the preparation of reflective student teachers was a necessary first step for program developers in universities and colleges. This was one of the reasons they included guided journal writing as a component in their inquiry-oriented teaching program. These journals provided students with an opportunity to reflect on a variety of issues relating to their teaching practices. Preservice students were involved in keeping guided journals where they recorded their experiences and posed questions to their supervisors about teaching. Journals were shared on a regular basis with their supervisors and were viewed as an integral part of the supervisory process. They found that the use of journal writing helped preservice teachers progress

through the cognitive-developmental stages and become reflective thinkers. This finding was supported in later studies (Bolin. 1988; Ross, 1990). Bolin found that reflective journal writing encouraged preservice teachers to critically analyse their teaching practices and become reflective thinkers.

Journal writing was found to be a significant supervisory tool and was promoted as a useful tool in the development of thoughtful, reflective teachers. As a result of these findings, specific support and practice in responding to reflective journals was initiated for field placement supervisors. Supervisors were taught to recognize teaching situations where they may challenge students to reflect on their teaching practices.

Summary

Research studies confirm there are numerous definitions for mentoring and, as a result of this, the purposes for developing a mentor program should determine the individual programs definition of choice. Researchers specifically encourage early childhood educators to consider mentor characteristics prior to developing mentor programs and selecting mentors. Although findings emphasize many important characteristics such as honesty and integrity, more recently, researchers have found that the most significant characteristic that supported and maintained the mentor relationship was the willingness of the teacher to be a mentor. Further to this, willingness was not only necessary but mandatory to a successful mentoring relationship.

Huling-Austin (1990a) promotes the idea that mentors assume certain degrees of responsibility for their mentees and this level of responsibility is dependent on which mentoring style mentors use. She maintains that when initiating mentors assume full responsibility for initiating relevant interactions and offering unsolicited support to their mentees, they both experience additional opportunities for professional growth.

Research demonstrates that mentors and mentees benefit in numerous ways as a result of the mentoring relationship. Mentors emphasized the professional benefits they gained whereas mentees elaborated on the emotional benefits. Researchers have found that both professional and emotional benefits are the results of a quality mentoring program. They believe that when mentors' and mentees' emotional development is considered and nurtured, they have more energies to devote to professional concerns. Early childhood educators are encouraged to consider these findings prior to establishing mentoring programs and take the steps necessary to ensure both areas of development are included.

Studies confirm that reflective practices do not just happen. However, given that mentors are most effective in the context of reflective practice, then mentoring programs must develop strategies to promote these practices. Two strategies that have been promoted in the development of reflective thinking are conferencing and reflective journal writing. Research shows positive relationships exist between journal writing, conferences, and reflective thinking for preservice students. However, limited research exists on the relationship between these strategies and reflective thinking for mentors.

Research does show that mentors need specific training in becoming reflective practitioners prior to becoming mentors. Studies have also shown that without specific training in the critical analysis of their own teaching practices, mentors are unable to guide their mentees in the critical analysis of their teaching practices through conferencing or journal writing.

While developing and implementing a mentor program in the early childhood education field may not provide an absolute answer for all of the concerns of the profession, a formal supportive program that includes opportunities for reflective practices has the potential to improve and enhance Early Childhood Education Programs.

Opportunities for reflective practices to occur across the early childhood education profession, beginning with the preservice students (mentees) and including the experienced educators (mentors), hold promise for more informed and knowledgeable early childhood educators. The domino effect may be improved quality child care for children and families, better working conditions for the early childhood educators, and enriched field placement experiences for preservice students. Reflective practices do not automatically happen; they take planning, training and practice for mentors and mentees, particularly in developing skills relating to reflective thinking.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) state that qualitative research methods " allow us to know people personally and to see them as they are developing their own definitions of the world" (p.4). This statement depicts the importance of the process that was undertaken during this study at an early childhood education demonstration center in a provincial college. The case study gave the researcher an opportunity to observe the participants as they developed and implemented a formal reflective mentoring program for experienced early childhood educators and students that would provide opportunities for reflective practices and promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood education teaching practices.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe a case study as a detailed examination of one setting, a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event. For purposes of this study, eight participants in one setting were examined. The following sections provide in-depth details of the setting and population of the study, the selection of participants, time frame of the study, as well as the data collection methods, and data analysis and interpretation procedures.

Setting and Population of the Study

Early Childhood Education Demonstration Center

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identify several important attributes of qualitative research which exist to varying degrees in this study. One such attribute is that qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument. Such was the case in this particular study with several of the early childhood educators and students providing the direct source of data and the researcher as the immediate person responsible for data collection.

The setting for this study was an early childhood education center which is a demonstration center for students studying Early Childhood Education at a provincial college. The center, as part of the training program, has been operating in this capacity for ten years. The primary objectives of the center are to provide a learning environment for students in training whereby they work directly with children and early childhood educators in a realistic setting as an extension and reinforcement of their academic studies, and to provide quality child care services to children, ages 2 1/2 years to 6 years, and their families.

The center has two available playrooms and can accommodate children in full-day and half-day programs. These programs operate independently of one another, each with its own group of children, teaching teams and daily schedules (see Table 1). The spaces, (as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2), are organized into distinct learning areas which offer opportunities for children's growth in several developmental aspects: physical, emotional,

intellectual, and social. The learning areas include: a dramatic corner, a block area, a book corner, a science and math area, a collage table, and a sand and water area.

The center has several rooms equipped with a variety of audio-visual and special effects equipment. These rooms include a student classroom and an observation booth. This booth is equipped with television monitors, two-way mirrors, audio systems and headphones, allowing student and child observations to occur on a regular basis.

Parents are welcome to visit the center each day while children attend their program. A special area referred to as the Parent Corner has been set up with cozy chairs, bulletin boards and resource materials to enrich their stay. This space is particularly useful when children are first registered at the center, and parents want to remain close during their children's first days.

The center has an administrative office which functions also as a meeting space. In the office resource materials and confidential files are stored. In addition, the center has a staff lounge which provides space for rest periods, lunches, and meetings; and a kitchen for preparing meals for the children.

Employed at the center are twelve early childhood educators, seven are full-time educators and four are substitute educators employed on an "as and when required" basis. In addition, there is one full-time manager. Five of the full-time educators and four of the substitute educators have an early childhood education diploma. The remaining two full-time educators have a certificate in early childhood education. The manager has two related degrees in primary education and special education.

There are 88 children ranging in ages from 2 1/2 years to 6 years registered at the center, with 40 children attending at any one time (see Table 1). The children in the full-day program and the two half-day morning programs participated in the study and are referred to throughout the text as Child 1, Child 2, Child 3 . . . 56.

There are five Early Childhood Education Programs for the children: one full-day program, two half-day morning programs and two half-day afternoon programs. Each program has its own group of children, teaching team, and program schedule (see Table 1).

The full-day children's program has three educators and 24 children. Eight children are assigned to each educator. Each educator has an individualized schedule, ensuring adequate programming and supervision throughout the day. The program begins at 8:00 AM and ends at 5:30 PM.

There are two half-day morning programs. One program operates on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, and the other operates on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Each program runs from 8:30 AM until 12:30 PM. Sixteen children are registered in each program and two educators coordinate both programs. Eight children are assigned to each educator.

There are two half-day afternoon programs. One program operates on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, and the other operates on Tuesday and Thursday

afternoons. Each program runs from 12:45 PM until 4:30 PM. Sixteen children are registered in each program and two educators coordinate both programs. Eight children are assigned to each educator.

Selection of Participants

Mentors

The seven full-time early childhood educators employed at the children's demonstration center expressed interest in participating in the study and they also met the selection criteria developed for the study. However, for the purposes of this research, four early childhood educators were selected randomly as mentors based on meeting all of the selection criteria. The following selection criteria was developed by several researchers (Enz, 1992; Odell, 1990a; Whitebook et al. 1994), as well as by the researcher:

1. Holds a certificate, diploma or degree in Early Childhood Education.
2. Has a minimum of three years working as an early childhood educator in a licensed child care center.
3. Works currently full-time at the early childhood education demonstration center, site of the study, as an early childhood educator.
4. Spends four to seven hours a day working directly with the children.

Table 1. Description of Children's Programs

Program	Days	Number of children	Number of staff	Hours of operation
Full-Day	Monday - Friday	24	3	8:00 AM-5:30 PM
Half-Day Morning	Monday, Wednesday & Friday	16	2*	8:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Half-Day Morning	Tuesday & Thursday	16	2 *	8:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Half-Day Afternoon	Monday, Wednesday & Friday	16	2**	12:45 PM - 4:30 PM
Half-Day Afternoon	Tuesday & Thursday	16	2 **	12:45 - 4:30 PM

Note. * represents the half-day morning program teaching team

** represents the half-day afternoon program teaching team

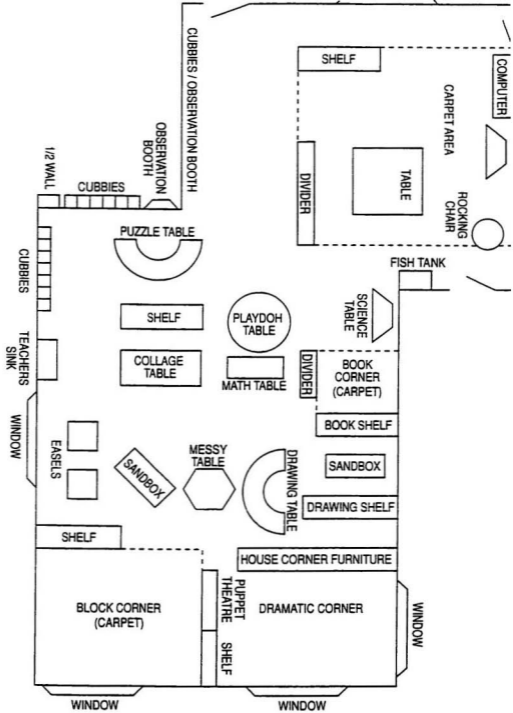


Figure 1. Full-Day Playroom

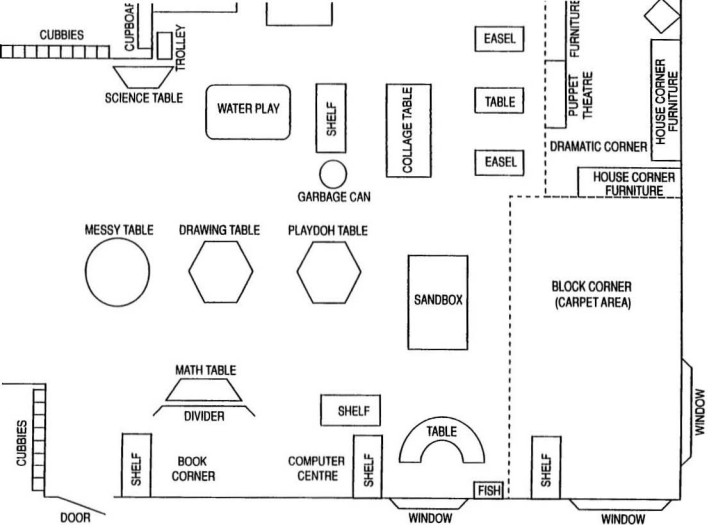


Figure 2. Half-Day Playground

Throughout the study the selected mentors were referred to as MTR1, MTR2, MTR3, and MTR4 (see Table 2). The mentors' work experience ranged from 5 to 12 years, with an average of 9.5 years. MTR1 and MTR4 had a certificate in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and were currently completing a two-year diploma in Early Childhood Education through part-time studies at a provincial college, and MTR2 and MTR3 had completed their two-year diploma in Early Childhood Education.

Table 2. Mentor Profiles

Mentors	Years work experience	Highest level of education
MTR1	11 Years	1 year certificate in ECE
MTR2	10 Years	2 year diploma in ECE
MTR3	5 years	2 year diploma in ECE
MTR4	12 years	1 year certificate in ECE

Mentees

The selection of four mentees was based on one criterion. Each mentee had to be enrolled as a full-time 2nd year student in the Early Childhood Education Program at the provincial college where the research was conducted. Of the 30 students who met the criterion, 29 expressed interest in participating in the study. However, for the purpose of

this research. four of these 29 early childhood education students were selected randomly as mentees. Throughout the study, selected mentees were referred to as MTE1, MTE2, MTE3, and MTE4.

Pairing Mentors and Mentees

The four selected mentors were paired randomly with the four selected mentees. Throughout the study MTR1 and MTE1, and MTR3 and MTE3 worked together in the full-day program whereas, MTR2 and MTE2, and MTR4 and MTE4 worked together in the half-day morning program.

Preparation: Mentors and Mentees

Prior to the study, the mentors and mentees had not had any formal experience or training in mentoring and reflective practice. Therefore, the researcher provided resource materials and training seminars on these topics before the study and throughout the study for all the participants.

Time Frame of the Study

The time frame for the study coincided with the third semester field placement for the second year students at the college. Because the field placement was planned in three phases, the researcher referred to the time frame of the study as Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III (see Table 3). Phase I referred to weeks one-four while the students were in

field placement for one day a week. Phase II referred to weeks five-seven, while the students were in field placement for five days a week. Phase III referred to weeks eight-twelve, while students were in field placement for one day a week. This schedule was followed for all second year early childhood education students in field placement during this time period.

Table 3. Case Study Time Frame

Phase	Duration: Weeks	Number of days per week
I	1 - 4	1
II	5 - 7	5
III	8 - 12	1

Data Collection

An attribute of qualitative research according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) is thick description. Merriam (1988) defines thick description as "the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (p.11). Merriam and Simpson (1995) cite thick description as a strategy to strengthen internal validity and reliability. They state that such description involves providing enough information so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and

hence, whether findings can be transferred (p.103). This quality is especially important with respect to this particular case study.

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), there are several basic ways to collect data in qualitative research. Three of Merriam and Simpson's methods were used in this study: interviewing, observation and documents. If the intent is to get as close to reality as possible while maintaining internal validity, they suggest collecting multiple sources of data through a variety of ways. The use of multiple sources of data was the strategy of choice for this study, as participants were interviewed before and after the study; observed daily as they worked together; observed and audio taped as they met daily for conferences; and wrote journals about their experiences, which were also collected daily.

Permission was granted by all participants to audiotape interviews and conferences, and to use the contents of these interviews and conferences, as well as their journal writings, as descriptive data for the study (see Appendix A).

Interviewing

Interviewing is probably the most frequently used strategy in qualitative studies on adult education and training (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). For purposes of this study, two weeks prior to the study and immediately following its completion, structured interviews were conducted with each of the mentors and mentees. A set of questions was developed for the mentors and another set was developed for the mentees (see Appendix

B). Questions were developed based on the researcher's queries relating to mentoring Early Childhood Education students during training. For example, the researcher was interested in determining the participants' knowledge of the following mentoring issues before the study and again after the study: the role of the mentor, benefits of mentoring, and effective strategies and skills of mentors. This information would be important in the light of whether or not the participants' knowledge about mentoring had changed during the study. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) caution researchers to avoid controlling the content of interviews too rigidly, and to allow the participants time and encouragement to "tell their story". The purpose of the interviews was not to manipulate or guide a correct response but rather to understand the participants' thoughts about mentoring issues before and again after the study. These interviews were audiotaped and then the tapes were transcribed. The transcriptions became part of the thick description for later analysis. As well, the researcher wrote notes during each interview to support the audiotape transcriptions.

Observations

Another major means of collecting data during the study was through observations. Throughout the study, the researcher observed each mentor and mentee pair twice during each day for thirty minutes (see Table 4). The focus of these observations was to identify the mentors' modeling and coaching strategies and skills used to demonstrate early childhood teaching practices. There were nine observations per

pair during Phase I, twenty-five during Phase II and eight during Phase III. MTR2 was absent for part of the study due to illness and as a result fewer observations of her and her mentee were completed. A total of nine observations were completed on this pair in Phase I, nine during Phase II and there were zero completed in Phase III (see Table 4). Data collected during this time was recorded on data collection forms, through the use of descriptive field notes (see Appendix C).

Written field notes of the daily observations of participants as they worked with children and each other were recorded to determine the mentoring strategies and skills that mentors used as they worked with their mentees to demonstrate meaningful and purposeful early childhood teaching practices.

Conferences

Throughout the study, each mentor and mentee pair conducted a daily conference session for thirty minutes between 2:00 PM and 4:00 PM (see Table 4). The researcher did not provide an outline for the participants to follow. These conferences occurred in the administrative office without any interruptions. During Phase I, four conferences occurred for each mentor and mentee pair; fifteen conferences occurred during Phase II; and five conferences occurred during Phase III. MTR2 was absent for part of the study due to illness and as a result she and her mentee participated in fewer conferences. They participated in four conferences during Phase I and four during Phase II. MTR2 was absent throughout Phase III.

One of the major purposes of conferencing was to examine its effectiveness as a strategy where reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices could be promoted and encouraged. Another purpose of conferencing was to identify mentor qualities which create a non-threatening environment where mentees and mentors could become reflective thinkers. Each conference was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim; as well, the researcher observed each conference and wrote field notes to support the audiotape transcriptions.

Journal Writing

Throughout the study, participants wrote daily journals to self-reflect on their work with children and their teaching practices. The researcher provided an outline to the participants for their journal entries to encourage guided self-reflections (see Appendix D). The contents of these journal entries became part of the descriptive field notes and were coded and analysed during the data analysis phase.

One of the major purposes of journal writing was to examine its effectiveness as a mentoring strategy that promoted reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices. A photocopy of these writings was collected by the researcher at the end of each day for clustering and coding. At the end of the study, the researcher collected all original journal writings to ensure all entries were coded and included in the data.

Three mentor and mentee pairs completed eight journal writings throughout Phase I, thirty during Phase II, and ten writings during Phase III. MTR2 did not complete any

journal writings due to her absence from the study, however MTE2 completed 4 journal writings in Phase I, fifteen writings during Phase II, and 5 writings during Phase III (see Table 4).

Table 4. Data collection measures

Participants	Interviews			Observations			Conferences			Journal Writings		
	Phase			Phase			Phase			Phase		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
MTR1&MTE1	2	0	2	9	25	8	4	15	5	8	30	10
MTR2&MTE2	2	0	2	9	9	0	4	4	0	4*	15*	5*
MTR3&MTE3	2	0	2	9	25	8	4	15	5	8	30	10
MTR4&MTE4	2	0	2	9	25	8	4	15	5	8	30	10
Total	8	0	8	36	84	24	12	49	15	28	105	35

Note. * refers to journal writings in each phase by MTE2 only.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis of qualitative research is the process of systematically searching and arranging the data obtained throughout the study. Researchers, such as Bogdan and Biklen (1992), maintain that this is the major part of a process that moves the researcher from lengthy pages of descriptive notes to completion of a study.

Throughout the study, interviews were audiotaped before and after the study and transcribed verbatim for later analysis; daily field notes of observations were written, coded and analysed; conferences were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for later analysis and field notes were written to support the transcriptions; and journal writings were collected daily for coding and analysis.. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) recommend that a beginning researcher should borrow strategies from the analysis-in-the-field mode but should leave the more formal analysis until most of the data is collected. They do, however, recommend that some analysis take place during data collection to provide direction for future observation sessions. The researcher selected the latter mode for purposes of defining direction and bringing focus to the study. Coding categories were developed based on information gained during the data collection process as themes and patterns became evident in the field notes, transcriptions, and journal entries. The research question remained a guide throughout the selection of coding categories and provided direction for further observations. The literature review and the data collected were instrumental in guiding the clustering of strategies and skills necessary for a reflective mentoring program.

The researcher began the data analysis with the eight taped interviews that were conducted before the study. These audiotapes were transcribed and the responses to the interview questions were read carefully by the researcher. Next the researcher read the field notes of the first observations of the four mentor/mentee pairs that were written by the researcher as the mentor and mentee pairs worked with children and each other. It

was important during this time to pay attention to switches or transitions from one topic to the next. Often these switches or transitions by mentors allowed the researcher to make adjustments to the focus of her next observations as she gathered information for field notes. Conferences were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were read carefully by the researcher and coded and analysed throughout the study. Journal writings were also read daily and writings were coded and analysed by the researcher throughout the study.

Raw data from the interviews, observations, conferences, and journal writings were transferred to a computer program (The Ethnograph, 1994) and were analysed with the assistance of the computer program. This process involved entering verbatim data into a computer file and categorizing portions of the data, and then moving and organizing sections of the categorized data according to themes or topics. Data segments were then clustered and further analysed. When the coding was finished, the data material belonging to each category was assembled in computer files and a preliminary analysis was performed. This was the time when attention was paid to the actual content. When necessary, existing data were recoded and moved to the appropriate category. When the organizing and interpreting process was completed by the researcher, the organizing system helped to structure the data analysis results for the interviews, observations, conferences, and journal writings.

Summary

Qualitative methods were especially suited to this inquiry because the researcher was seeking to enhance the established field placement component in the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program offered at a provincial college. This particular study examined the experiences of four early childhood educators (mentors) and four early childhood education second year students (mentees) in a variety of situations, i.e., personal interviews, working with children and each other, conferences, and journal writing.

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), improvement of practice comes about as a result of understanding how the current practice works and the meaning it has for early childhood educators and students in this particular context. This study was an attempt to examine the practical-based component of a provincial Early Childhood Education Program and, based on the results of this study, to make recommendations for effective ways to establish formal professional relationships between early childhood educators (mentors) and students (mentees). Mentoring, particularly in the field of early childhood education, is a new concept and thus it was necessary to explore and examine this concept in light of its relationship to reflective practices. The study also explored the possibilities that now exist for these mentors and mentees to become reflective thinkers about their teaching practices after participating in a preservice training program that

promoted reflective practices. As a result of participating in this study, selected preservice students and educators in an Early Childhood Education training program at a provincial college have developed and implemented a formal reflective mentoring program that will provide opportunities to encourage reflective thinking in relation to Early Childhood Education teaching practices.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the descriptive data collected during the study. The researcher was interested in determining effective mentoring strategies and skills that the experienced early childhood educator demonstrated with early childhood preservice students to foster and promote reflective thinking in relation to meaningful and purposeful early childhood education teaching practices. Essentially, the main objective was to develop and implement a formal reflective mentoring program for experienced early childhood educators and students that would provide opportunities for reflective practices and promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood education teaching practices. As the progress of the mentors and mentees was followed by the researcher through various methods of data collection, strategies and skills emerged as important to include in a formal reflective mentoring program for Early Childhood Educators.

The researcher started with the idea that mentors would be most effective within the context of reflective practice. It was important for the experienced educators to reflect on what they knew and make this knowledge available to the inexperienced students. In an informal supervisory role, this knowledge is rarely made explicit and remains within the educators' actions. Although reflection is a difficult concept to identify, in this study the researcher attempted to construct a working view of reflection as it was revealed in the activities of experienced educators (mentors) and preservice

students (mentees) in a mentoring program. Throughout the study, mentoring strategies and skills were used in at least four different situations: mentors' and mentees' responses to interviews conducted before and after the study; observations of mentor and mentee pairs working together; and mentor and mentee conference discussions and journal writings.

This chapter provides the analysis of the data and evidence to support the analysis. The analysis reveals the importance of mentor training seminars, as well, an increase in the mentors' and mentees' understanding of mentoring and the mentoring process. It identifies effective mentoring strategies and skills used by mentors to supervise and support preservice students during their field placement. In addition, the analysis reveals the importance of conferencing and journal writing to promote mentor and mentee reflective thinking related to meaningful and purposeful Early Childhood Education teaching practices.

Seminars: Preparing Mentors and Mentees For Mentoring

Prior to the study, the mentors and mentees had not had any formal experience or training in mentoring and reflective thinking. Therefore, two weeks prior to the study, the researcher provided the mentors and mentees with two articles relating to mentoring and reflection. The first article entitled "Mentoring in Early Childhood Programs" (Lindamood, 1993) provided the participants with a definition of mentoring, mentoring functions, purposes of mentoring, and formal versus informal mentoring. The second

article entitled “Synthesis of Research on Teacher’s Reflective Thinking” (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991) emphasized the value of teachers’ own interpretations of their work. Three elements of reflection were stressed: cognition, critical thinking, and narrative inquiry. These articles were concise and provided very important information relating to mentoring and reflective thinking.

One week prior to the study, a seminar was held for all participants. This seminar was conducted to provide an overview of the study with an emphasis on mentoring and reflective thinking in early childhood education (see Appendix E). The articles “Mentoring in Early Childhood Programs” and “Synthesis of Research on Teachers’ Reflective Thinking” were referred to throughout the seminar for discussion purposes.

During the third week of the study, a sixty minute seminar was held for mentees with a focus on team planning meetings. This seminar was conducted by the researcher in response to the mentees’ request for assistance with planning and implementing appropriate activities for children based on their interests (see Appendix E for seminar agenda). A video, *The Daily Team Planning* (High Scope, 1992) was viewed by the mentees and discussed in light of their field placement. This video demonstrated a team planning meeting, where the early childhood educators planned developmentally appropriate curriculum activities for children. These curriculum plans were based on the needs and interests of individual children.

Mid-way through the fourth week of the study, a two hour seminar was conducted by the researcher. The purpose of this seminar was for mentors to identify and discuss

topics that would be helpful to them in their mentor role . One week prior to the seminar the researcher provided the mentors with a copy of the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program: Mentor's Handbook (Perry, 1994). This handbook contained information that was related to their mentor role. The mentors were asked to read this handbook prior to the seminar and be prepared to discuss it in light of the study. This seminar provided a context for mentors to share their views on the handbook and discuss how it could be made applicable to this study. It also provided a means to socialize with one another as they discussed the study in light of the Mentor Handbook (see Appendix E).

During this seminar, mentors discussed their observations of mentees and expressed concerns about whether or not they were providing appropriate modeling, coaching, and reflective feedback opportunities . In addition, the importance of encouraging and modeling reflective thinking practices for mentees was discussed.

During the 5th week, the researcher provided the mentors with a follow-up resource paper entitled "Suggestions for the Mentoring Study" (see Appendix E) prepared by the researcher. This paper summarized the ideas that mentors had discussed during the 4th seminar in the previous week. The following topics were highlighted:

(a) observations, (b) mentor modeling, (c) feedback, and (d) planning and reflective thinking. Mentors were encouraged to refer to this resource paper throughout the study.

The journal articles and seminars were provided for mentors and mentees to accommodate for their lack of formal training in mentoring and reflective thinking.

Reactions from all participants about the articles were favourable, however the seminars were thought to be crucial to the success of the study, according to all of the mentor and mentee participants.

Mentors and Mentees' Increase In Their Understanding of Mentoring and Mentoring Process

The comparative analysis of the interviews conducted with each mentor and mentee two weeks prior to the study and again at its completion revealed a growth in the mentors and mentees' understanding of the role of the mentor. It showed also an increase in their awareness of the benefits of mentoring. The analysis of the interview responses identified, in addition, a number of effective strategies that promoted reflective practices and showed the importance of conferencing as a means of fostering reflective practices. Evidence of this analysis gleaned for the interviews will be presented in the following sections: role of the mentor, awareness of benefits for mentors and mentees, and effective mentoring skills and strategies to promote reflective practices.

Role of the Mentor

Before the study, the mentors perceived the role of a mentor as a professional one, a role model. However, they were not sure what this role entailed nor how it would be performed or carried out. MTR1 thought a mentor would be "someone to look up to . . . a

role model . . . to help you grow . . . professionally.” MTR3 supported this view stating that, “ A mentor would be a positive role model for ECE (Early Childhood Education) students and would be there to provide feedback and guidance.”

In contrast, it was noted, that the mentees viewed mentoring in light of a friendship or a buddy system, ie., a personal role. MTE3 thought, “A mentor would be someone to confide in . . . and talk to about problems if you are stressed . . . like a buddy system. . . . someone who knows what it’s like to be a student.” MTE4 agreed with this view and added, “I don’t know a great deal about it. I feel it’s a significant person in your life . . . could be a parent or a teacher . . . anybody . . . important to you and makes a difference.”

It is apparent, therefore, from the interviews held before the study that the mentors’ and mentees’ understanding of the role of a mentor differed. The mentors perceived the role as a professional one, while the mentees saw the role as a personal one.

After the study, however, mentors and mentees expressed the importance of the personal role they engaged in with one another, as well as the importance of their professional roles. They felt more confident about how the relationship worked. Mentors emphasized the importance of balancing the professional role of mentoring with the personal role, whereas mentees emphasized the link that must exist between personal and professional relationships . MTR1 viewed the mentor’s role as “formal and direct. . . . A process of modeling . . . and students observing . . . more of a one on one. The

relationship, however, became more personal. I was a role model to my mentee personally and professionally and I think that made a big difference.” MTR3 emphasized this view when she referred to the importance of her personal and professional mentor role. “The relationship is closer now. More contact with your mentee gives you a chance to become closer with one another . . . in a personal and professional way. I have seen (MTE3’s name) grow in a very positive way.”

Mentees supported the views of the mentors and particularly noted the importance of mentors being professional role models. MTE3 viewed mentoring as, “having someone to guide . . . and support you . . . not teaching you. It is more guidance than teaching. When you are having difficulties (working with children) . . . they (mentors) help you.” MTE4 agreed, stating, “It is the support that helps you . . . professionally . . . and personally. When you work with someone on a professional level . . . it is also important for them to know you on a personal side. If that isn’t there . . . it is . . . difficult.”

It is apparent from the interviews held after the study that there was a growth in the mentors and mentees’ understanding of the role of the mentor. As a result of participating in the study, both the mentors and mentees perceived the mentor role as a dual one, that encompasses professional and personal responsibilities. After the study, the mentors and mentees’ reflected on their roles, and based their responses on these mentoring experiences, whereas, before the study and without prior mentoring experiences they could only predict what might be the role of the mentor.

Awareness of Benefits

Mentors' Benefits

Before the study the researcher noted that mentors' responses related to the benefits of mentoring clustered under two categories: professional and emotional. They were:

Professional Benefits:

- increased learning opportunities related to teaching practices
- enhanced interactive communication skills with students
- increased opportunities to provide feedback to students during field placement

Emotional Benefits:

- increased self-confidence
- greater sensitivity to students' needs

MTR4 thought that mentoring would make her more aware of what she would be teaching. She said:

Mentoring will make me more aware of what I am teaching . . . because I know that I will be observed and the students will be more focused on the teachers than before. I think the mentors will probably be meeting and discussing the program more often. That will help all of us with many areas of the program. My relationship with the students will help me to communicate with them better. I will be more aware of their needs and will be able to help them. Meeting with

them everyday will make a difference . . . to how I interact with them. I know that I will need to listen more.

MTR1 talked about looking forward to providing feedback to her student. She said:

I am looking forward to meeting with my student everyday. Giving feedback will help me to focus on my student more because I will want to provide good feedback. I have never done this before . . . not to the level we will be doing it during the study.

MTR2 thought her confidence would be enhanced as a result of participating in the study. She said:

I think participating in something like this [mentoring] will make me feel better about my work. I feel confident in what I do now . . . but I think I will be even more confident at the end of [mentoring]. . . especially when I work with the one student every day.

In addition, she admitted she would probably be more sensitive to her student's needs.

MTR2: Working with one student for the semester will make a difference to how we work together. I have a feeling that we will probably be a lot closer than in the past. I know that they [students] have a lot of responsibilities . . . with their course work and their placement. Being involved in this project [mentoring] should help us to help them more.

These cited benefits showed that the mentors had an understanding of the professional and emotional gains they would acquire if they participated in a mentoring program compared to not participating in such a program..

After the study, the mentors stated additional professional and emotional benefits. Also, they identified social benefits that they did not identify before the study. The additional benefits were:

Professional Benefits:

- increased awareness of the students' academic program
- increased awareness of the value of mentors' work with children
- enhanced the quality of the children's program as a result of mentors' improved teaching practices

Emotional Benefits:

- increased awareness of the importance of providing individualized attention to students
- increased opportunities to self-reflect

Social Benefits:

- increased personal relationships
- greater appreciation of the impact of personal lives on professional responsibilities

In regard to the mentors' professional benefits related to the increase in their awareness of the students' academic program, MTR1 stated:

This [mentoring] has kept us in touch more with the academic part of the program . . . more so than in previous field placements. I guess just meeting with the students daily and talking about their work and connecting their work with children to their course work was different from the past years. We had the time to discuss . . . where they were in their course work . . . and the kinds of experiences they needed to support what they were learning. I didn't do that before. There wasn't the time.

MTR4 expressed enthusiasm about her increased awareness of the importance of her work with children and the increased learning opportunities related to her teaching practices.

MTR4: I was always committed to my work with the children but I never really thought about how important that work is until now. I guess we talked about our work [with children] so much during conferences that you can't help but be influenced by it in a positive way. We do so much for children . . . we just didn't think about it before mentoring. I do feel that I am a better teacher because of my [mentoring] experience. I think more about the curriculum and how it connects to the children. I don't think I did that to this level before [mentoring].

MTR2 stated similar benefits with respect to an increased awareness of the importance of her work with children. In addition, she thought the quality of the children's program was enhanced as a result of her improved teaching practices.

MTR2: I was more conscious of my performance . . . providing better program

quality to the children and families . . . I can share this with other early childhood educators and [we can] provide quality programming to the children. I think not only the mentors will benefit, but the other ECE's [Early Childhood Educators] will also. Our program will be better as a result of mentoring.

MTR1 and MTR3 stated similar benefits.

With regard to the mentors' emotional benefits relating to an increased awareness of the importance of providing individualized attention to students, MTR3 remarked:

I know that in the past, I always treated the students as a group of students. I didn't realize how different they all were until now. MTE3's needs were different from the other mentees' needs and I know from talking to the other mentors they found the same thing. I wonder how the students in the past survived the field placement. It must have been difficult. They are all so different.

MTR1 and MTR4 conveyed similar thoughts on the importance of providing individualized attention to their mentees. In addition, they both thought the opportunities to self-reflect were instrumental in realizing how unique their mentee's needs were compared to the other mentees'. MTR1 stated:

I reflected so much on my day and everything that happened . . . that I couldn't help but realize how unique MTE1 was. I saw MTE3 work in the full-day room alongside MTE1 and they were so different. I have never thought so much about my work and the students in field placement.

MTR3 agreed, stating, " I think [my] *thinking* [italics added] helped [me] to understand

MTE3's needs, as well as my own. I know that I will be influenced by my reflections . . . and will continue to do this [reflect] after the project [study]".

The social benefits of mentoring were not realized until after the study. MTR1 elaborated on the importance of her new friendship with MTE1.

MTR1: I know that MTE1 is more than a student in placement. She is a friend. We have shared many personal things and we both realized that we have a lot in common. We are planning on continuing our friendship after the study.

MTR3 felt the same about her relationship with MTE3. In addition, she found that she had a greater appreciation of the impact MTE3's personal life had on her professional responsibilities.

MTR3: I never thought that I should be aware of the influence the student's personal life has on her placement responsibilities. But I certainly learned that this is important to realize . . . the earlier the better during placement . . . if you are going to help your mentee focus on her placement. There was a balance of helping MTE3 talk about her personal issues but then knowing when to say, "okay, now let's get on with our work", and saying it in a sensitive manner. I think I can do that a lot better now. I also realize the importance of letting mentee's talk about personal issues . . . especially if they are interfering with their work. It is better to talk about them and then get on with the work.

It was apparent that participating in the study increased the mentors' awareness of the benefits of mentoring. They expressed additional professional and emotional benefits

as a result of mentoring. In addition, they commented on the social benefits of mentoring.

Mentees' Benefits

The responses gathered from the mentees, before the study, related to the benefits they would gain by participating in a mentoring program, clustered under one category: emotional. The mentees made no reference to professional or social benefits. The cited emotional benefits were:

Emotional Benefits

- increased support system for students during field placement
- greater personal relationship between students and educators

MTE1 discussed the potential emotional benefit of having a support system during field placement.

MTE1: [Mentoring] provides a support system . . . that you could turn to if you needed advice . . . or if something upset you. If you have an idea or an activity that you would like to plan, they [mentors] have more experience. They know a lot more and you can bounce things off [of them] before you try it yourself.

In addition, MTE4 spoke about the possibilities for making a new friend, as a result of mentoring.

MTE4: There will be someone there for you if you are frustrated or feeling stressed or if you feel that you are all alone. You could really get a nice friend . . .

someone you can confide in. It is so nice for someone to understand what you are going through.

After the study, however, the mentees identified additional emotional benefits as well as professional and social benefits. The additional benefits were:

Emotional Benefits:

- increased individual attention from mentors during field placement
- increased confidence

Professional Benefits:

- enhanced observational skills
- increased opportunities to learn new teaching practices
- increased opportunities to receive feedback
- increased opportunities to discuss professional issues with a colleague

Social Benefits:

- increased friendships with mentors

With regard to the mentees' emotional benefits relating to their increased individual attention from mentors during field placement, MTE1 marvelled at the level of individualized attention she received from MTR1.

MTE1: I think that MTR1 had a better understanding of what I was going through in the program than in the past field placements. She [MTR1] was so aware of what my needs were that I never doubted her advice. If MTR3 was doing something one way for MTE3, MTR1 would always check to see if that was okay

for me and my situation. For example, one day we were responsible for decorating the bulletin board . . . and MTR3 said that we [MTE3 and I] could do it during lunch. MTR1 checked to see if that was okay with me. She was concerned that I might miss my lunch. She didn't take for granted that because it was okay for MTE3 . . . it was okay for me.

Increased confidence is a skill that usually comes with much experience, however, as a result of participating in a mentoring program, all mentees felt their confidence in working with children and adults was enhanced. MTE4 reported:

I feel more confident in myself. I don't feel so alone. I had guidance and support that I never had in the past. I think I have learned more in this placement than I probably learned since I started the program. I feel self accomplishment.

MTE1 agreed, commenting, "I am more confident and have had a lot more experiences. I know I can keep building on these experiences."

The professional benefits of mentoring were conveyed by all the mentees after the study. MTE3 admitted she had developed new teaching practices as a result of her enhanced observational skills.

MTE3: When MTR3 told me to observe her for particular skills, she gave me a focus. I knew exactly what I was looking for. In the past, I observed but didn't focus and I don't think I learned as much. I was taking too much in. During this placement, I learned new techniques on guiding behaviour, ways to interact with

the children, and how to plan and set up activities that went better for the children. I learned a lot about teaching and I learned a lot of new skills relating to my course work.

According to MTE2, the increased opportunities to receive feedback, actually increased her opportunities to discuss professional issues with MTR2. She maintained:

I had more opportunities to get feedback, to give feedback, and ask questions. During conferences, we discussed many of the things that occurred in the day and when MTR2 gave me feedback, she encouraged me to talk about the situation. She talked and I talked and that is when I really learned how to teach children. I think the feedback was the best because I learned so much and I had an opportunity to discuss the feedback. That made a difference to what I got out of this [mentoring].

All of the mentees identified the social benefit of mentoring, with regard to the friendships they had developed with their mentors. MTE1 summarized her thoughts, stating:

I now have a friendship that I know will be important to me for a long time . . . hopefully forever. It was a great experience to learn so many new things from my mentor and she never made me feel inadequate when I didn't understand something.

MTE2, MTE3, and MTE4 expressed similar thoughts.

As a result of participating in the study, mentees became more aware of the

emotional, professional, and social benefits of mentoring. They felt that many of the benefits would assist them in their future professional and personal lives.

Effective Mentoring Strategies And Skills To Promote Reflective Practices

Mentoring Strategies

Conferencing

Before the study, 100% of the mentors and mentees felt that conference time should be scheduled daily to reflect on their teaching practices. Mentors thought that if the time was not scheduled, then conferencing would not happen. Their past field placement experiences with preservice students did not include times to meet on a formal basis. However, they felt that conferencing was necessary to include in a mentoring program. MTR3 stated, “the limitations on time . . . to meet freely during the day and the pressures to be with the children made it impossible to reflect on the day in any meaningful way. MTR4 agreed with this opinion commenting, “You get consumed with your work, and although you want to provide feedback on a daily basis, there is always something else that gets your attention.”

Mentees also believed that time should be scheduled for conferences. However, prior to the study, this was not their experience during field placements. At that time, the mentees received only an informal written report from their supervisors at the end of their field placement term. Although MTE2 was pleased with such a report, she believed, “We should have received daily verbal feedback. This would ensure that we would have

an opportunity to ask questions. Written reports only, don't have the same effect. It doesn't prompt questions." This opinion was supported by MTE1, who felt that providing opportunities to sit down and discuss what had happened throughout the day would have been productive. "If a time is scheduled you are more likely to meet. Otherwise you may have the best intentions but they might get put aside."

Therefore, from the interviews held before the study, the mentors and mentees believed that conferencing should be scheduled if reflection on daily teaching practices was to occur. Mentors and mentees maintained there were so many things happening throughout the day that unless conferences were scheduled, they would not occur spontaneously.

After the study, 100% of mentors and mentees continued to express their views that daily formal conferencing was critical to include in a mentoring program, particularly if mentors and mentees were to become reflective thinkers in relation to their teaching practices. MTR3 felt that scheduled conference time provided a time to reflect on daily teaching practices. She said:

Conferencing gives the student and early childhood educator a chance to sit and reflect on what had happened over the day . . . You can't do it with children present, it is impossible. There are too many things on the go . . . with regards to the children and the program itself. If the students were unsure of something that had happened during the day, it gives them the opportunity to ask.

MTR4 agreed that conferencing encouraged reflective thinking for mentors and mentees

about teaching practices and concerns. She stated, "You got together and reflected on your morning and if there were any problems you could talk about them. That was really important."

Mentees acknowledged that conferencing was important to include in a mentoring program. They emphasized that daily scheduling of conferences was crucial to effective mentoring. They expressed concern that if conferencing was left to chance, it probably would not occur. They maintained their satisfaction with scheduled conferences as being the most helpful part of mentoring. MTE1 stated "conferencing was always the most informative and helpful part . . . a specific time set aside. It was just perfect." MTE2 elaborated on the importance of setting aside a specific time for conferencing. She thought, "If you didn't have the time set aside, you might not even bother to ask about problems or areas that you need help with. It would be just left."

It was apparent from the mentors and mentees' responses to the interview question related to the importance of conferencing that, in order to become reflective thinkers about teaching practices, an uninterrupted conference time must be given priority in a mentoring program. Based on their experience during the study, they perceived conferencing as being the most important means of fostering reflective practices. They recognized that conferencing encouraged them to reflect on their teaching practices and make adjustments based on their reflections.

As shown in Table 5 and Table 6, before the study and again after the study, mentors and mentees thought 15-30 minutes should be scheduled for daily conferencing.

The majority of mentors stated that 30 minutes was necessary for meaningful conferencing. Before the study, MTR1 emphasized the importance of having 30 minutes each day “to look at the program and the day, they [mentees] always have questions.” This thinking was supported again after the study as she reflected on the conferences that occurred during the study. She maintained “the thirty minutes was good to sit down and touch base and reflect on the day.” Before the study, MTE2 thought that “probably 15 minutes most days would be enough. MTE4 expressed similar thoughts, “15 minutes . . . because they (mentors) have a lot of other things to do.”

After the study, however, mentees felt that more time was necessary if conferencing was to be effective in promoting reflective teaching practices. They felt that the average time necessary for conferencing should be at least 30 minutes. MTE2 felt that “sometimes even 30 minutes wasn’t enough, you could need more time depending on whether or not there were problems. You may need up to thirty minutes and sometimes that was not long enough.” MTE4 felt that often it would depend on what happened during the day. She thought, “It depends often on the day and how busy it was. When I was having a lot of problems our conference was longer. But 30 minutes I found to be fairly good.”

It was interesting to note that whereas mentors were aware of the necessity of conferencing and the length of time necessary to conference effectively even before the study, mentees did not realize the importance of conferences or the length of time necessary to conference until after the study. However, after experiencing conferencing,

100% of the mentees agreed that in order to get the most from mentoring and to allow time to reflect on teaching practices, a minimum of 30 minutes must be scheduled for conferencing. After experiencing conferencing, they realized that 15 minutes was inadequate.

Table 5. Scheduled Conference Time - Mentors

Participants	Before	After
MTR1	30 Minutes	30 Minutes
MTR2	30 Minutes	15 Minutes
MTR3	30 Minutes	30 Minutes
MTR4	15 Minutes	30 Minutes
Average time	26 Minutes	26 Minutes

Table 6. Scheduled Conference Times - Mentees

Participants	Before	After
MTE1	30 Minutes	30 Minutes
MTE2	15 Minutes	30 Minutes
MTE3	30 Minutes	30 Minutes
MTE4	15 Minutes	30 Minutes
Average time	23 Minutes	30 Minutes

Journal Writing

Before the study, neither mentors nor mentees identified journal writing as an effective mentoring strategy. However, after the study, mentors and mentees acknowledged journal writing as an effective mentoring strategy for encouraging reflection on daily teaching practices. MTR1 emphasized “journal writing [would give] us an opportunity to reflect over the whole day and how we felt about it.” MTR4 supported this opinion, stating, “When I wrote in my journal I found that it made me reflect on the day. Was it what I expected, did I do the things that I wanted to do?”

MTE1 stated, “When I wrote in my journal, I reflected back on the whole day. I thought about what (MTR1’s name) had done with the children, especially when she did her activities.” MTE3 supported this view, stating:

Journal writing gave me the opportunity to reflect back on what I had done during the day. I thought about the children’s reactions to the activities I presented and the activities (MTR3’s name) presented. I learned a lot by reflecting this way.

As a result of journal writing during the study, the mentors and mentees found it to be an effective mentoring strategy that promoted reflective thinking related to their daily teaching practices.

Modeling and Coaching

Before the study, the mentors and mentees did not identify modeling and coaching as mentoring strategies that would be used to demonstrate early childhood teaching

practices. However, after the study, they recognized that both modeling and coaching were useful and effective mentoring strategies that helped demonstrate early childhood teaching practices. MTR1 stated that “modeling teaching practices for MTE1 initiated many reflective discussions during conferences.” As well, she maintained that “coaching skills gave my mentee an opportunity to practice specific teaching skills with my help. This was an excellent opportunity for her to try something that she hadn’t tried before and feel reassured that I was there to help.” MTR3 supported the importance of modeling and coaching for her mentee. She stated:

My mentee could not have had the positive experiences she had without the modeling and coaching I provided throughout the study. She needed support and I provided it in many ways but it was especially relevant when I coached her during the implementation of her activities or guiding the children’s behaviour.

MTE1 agreed that “if it weren’t for the opportunities to observe MTR1, I don’t think I would have been able to actually do the activities. She was so helpful. She always knew where I needed help.” MTE3 recognized the importance of modeling and coaching. She stated:

If MTR3 hadn’t been there to assist me, there would have been many times when I could not have made it through the day. She always told me what to watch for at the conferences. She would say, “watch when I am getting set up for the play dough activity. Notice how I set up the area and get the children involved.” That was great for me. I then knew what to observe.

After the study, mentors and mentees had developed an understanding of mentoring strategies. Modeling and coaching promoted reflective thinking during conferences in relation to teaching practices.

Mentoring Skills

Before the study, mentors and mentees thought that mentors would need to demonstrate particular mentoring skills in order to encourage effective early childhood teaching practices. The skills they identified clustered under one category: communication. The skills they cited as being pertinent to fostering reflective thinking related to teaching practices were:

- reflective listening
- reflective speaking

Although the mentors maintained that they should have effective communication skills to be successful mentors, they did not define these skills nor elaborate on how or why they were important. In this regard, MTR1 stated that, "Good adult communications skills are important." MTR3 agreed and noted that, "reflective listening and speaking and active listening . . . should be helpful when teaching the students new teaching practices." The mentees agreed that communication skills were important but like the mentors, did not elaborate on specific communication skills or why they thought these skills were important. It is apparent, therefore, from the responses to the interview question, related to the mentors and mentees' understanding of mentoring skills that

promote reflective thinking, that their insight was limited. This implied a lack of knowledge about mentoring and specifically, mentoring skills.

After the study, all of the mentors and mentees stated the importance of the communication skills used throughout the study. However, they explained how those skills were useful during the study. MTR3 elaborated on the importance of being a reflective speaker and an active listener.

MTR3: You had to practice listening . . . really listening to your mentee. As I listened to (MTE3's name), it was easier to respond to her in a reflective way. I would repeat what she had said to clarify what she said or sometimes I would repeat so that she would hear what she had said again. I did this when I wanted her to really think about what she had said. It worked. I think as I actively listened she knew I was genuinely interested in what she was saying. I think she became a better listener as the study progressed.

MTR1 and MTR4 made similar comments about the importance of listening to their mentees before speaking. MTR3 summarized her thoughts on the importance of communicating effectively with her mentee, " I learned how to stop talking enough to really listen to MTE3 and that took some practice. But I think I was beginning to do it."

In addition, the mentors and mentees identified a skill they had not identified before the study. They thought that *giving appropriate feedback* [italics added] was a mentoring skill that was particularly useful in promoting reflective thinking leading to effective teaching practices.

MTR1 thought the opportunities to provide reflective feedback to her mentee was invaluable. She said:

You go over your day. . . . You are reflecting on everything they [mentees] have done. When you say it [feedback], it is different. When students comment on how valuable the feedback is to their work with children then you know you are doing something that is going to help them the next day, and the day after.

MTE1 emphasized the importance of the feedback that her mentor provided throughout the study. She thought that receiving feedback was critical to her becoming a reflective thinker in relation to early childhood education teaching practices.. She stated:

I would always look forward to what (MTR1's name) said to me, the kind of feedback that she would give me. It made me think about what I had done [teaching children] and what I would do in the future [teaching practices]. I think the verbal feedback is critical. You remember it when you work with the children again.

The other mentees agreed that receiving feedback from their mentors was one of the most important skills that the mentors used to promote their reflective thinking.

As a result of participating in the study, mentors and mentees thought that there were specific mentor skills that were more effective than others in promoting reflective thinking related to teaching practices. In particular, when mentors listened to mentees and responded in a reflective manner, reflective thinking was encouraged.

Summary

Analysis of the interviews conducted with each mentor and mentee pairs prior to the study and again at its completion revealed an increase in their understanding of mentoring and the mentoring process. The importance of the personal and professional roles of the mentor became apparent to the mentors and the mentees as they reflected on their mentoring experiences after the study. In addition, they expressed a renewed awareness of the professional, emotional, and social benefits of mentoring. However, established friendships and collegial experiences were social benefits they had not thought about prior to the study.

Before the study, mentors and mentees had a limited understanding of mentoring strategies and skills that were necessary to promote effective teaching practices. However, after participating in the study, they recognized the importance of several strategies and skills in the promotion of reflective thinking related to effective teaching practices. The mentors' use of effective communication skills was elaborated on after the study, as well, the mentors' use of reflective feedback was thought to be useful in the promotion of reflective thinking related to effective teaching practices. Conferencing was recognized before and after the study as a means of fostering reflective practices during mentoring. When conferencing occurred on a daily basis, mentors and mentees believed they became reflective thinkers about their teaching practices. The importance of journal writing as a mentoring strategy that promoted reflective thinking related to teaching practices was

recognized by the mentors and mentees after they experienced journal writing during the study.

Modeling and coaching were thought to be effective mentoring strategies when they were used by the mentors to demonstrate and nurture meaningful early childhood teaching practices.

Mentoring Strategies and Skills Used To Demonstrate Early Childhood Teaching Practices

The analysis of the descriptive field notes of the researcher's observations of the mentors and mentees teaching collaboratively revealed that all the mentors used two major mentoring strategies to demonstrate and nurture meaningful early childhood teaching practices. These strategies were modeling and coaching. When mentors needed to demonstrate specific teaching or guidance strategies, they modeled the strategies as the mentees observed. Coaching, on the other hand, was used to support the mentees as they implemented curriculum activities or guided children's behaviours.

Mentors Modeling Strategies and Skills

Modeling in the context of this study referred to a mentoring strategy used by the mentors to demonstrate appropriate early childhood teaching practices, such as planning and coordinating daily routines, and planning and implementing curriculum. In addition, the mentors used the modeling strategy to demonstrate effective guidance practices

appropriate for guiding children's behaviours. Such modeling provided the mentees the opportunity to observe new and/or appropriate teaching practices before they used them. The researcher noted that modeling was used also when a mentee required additional observing of a particular teaching practice to perfect her practice.

Through discussions with the mentees and observations of their teaching practices, the mentors recognized that the mentees lacked the confidence and skills necessary to plan and coordinate daily routines, to plan and implement curriculum activities, and to guide children's behaviours. It was important, therefore, that the mentors initiate opportunities to model these appropriate practices as they worked collaboratively with their mentees.

The mentors shared their insights with the researcher regarding the mentees' confidence and knowledge related to teaching and guidance practices. The mentors stated their belief that one of the most valuable aspects of their mentor role was to model appropriate strategies related to planning and coordinating daily routines, curriculum development and implementation, and guiding children's behaviours. They believed that modeling would ensure that the mentees' skills and understandings of curriculum and guidance would be enhanced steadily over the duration of the study.

Throughout the study, all of the mentors spent time modeling a variety of curriculum and guidance strategies and skills for their mentees (see Table 7). MTR2 was absent for part of Phase II and throughout Phase III, therefore, modeling frequencies were less for her during this time than for the other mentors. Modeling occurred on 328

occasions throughout the study. Strategies related to curriculum development and implementation were modeled on 236 occasions, with 66 of these occurrences related to planning and coordinating daily routines, and 170 related to planning and implementing curriculum activities. Guidance strategies, specifically regarding guiding children's behaviours occurred on 92 occasions (see Table 7).

Table 7. Mentor Modeling Strategies and Skills

MTR	Planning & Coordinating Daily Routines			Planning & Implementing Curriculum Activities			Guiding Children's Behaviours		
	Phase			Phase			Phase		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
1	12	7	0	6	46	8	8	23	6
2	11	4	0	10	10	0	2	5	0
3	10	7	0	7	35	8	9	25	8
2	12	3	0	5	30	5	0	3	3
Subtotal	45	21	0	28	121	21	19	56	17
Total	66			170			92		

Mentors Model Planning and Coordinating Daily Routines and Curriculum Planning and Implementation

During the study, mentees were responsible for demonstrating their ability to plan and coordinate daily routines, and to plan and implement curriculum activities. Mentors,

therefore, had a responsibility to ensure they modeled the strategies and skills related to teaching practices prior to expecting the mentees to demonstrate them. The mentors took their responsibility seriously when they modeled teaching practices, such as, planning and coordinating daily routines, and planning and implementing curriculum activities.

During Phase I, the mentees were responsible for assisting the mentors in planning and coordinating the daily routines, such as snack, lunch, and transition times. However, depending on the mentees' skill development in these areas, during Phase II, they would be expected to take responsibility for planning and coordinating the routines without mentor assistance. Throughout Phase I, the mentees expressed concerns to their mentors about coordinating snack and lunch routines and transition times. They felt intimidated by the children during these times and were anxious about being responsible for this part of the curriculum. As a result of their concerns, the mentors thought it was important they model strategies and skills related to planning and coordinating these daily routines prior to modeling other skills related to planning and implementing curriculum activities.

When MTE1 hesitated to assist her mentor during a lunch routine, she asked her mentor, "Could I observe you today? I am nervous even assisting you during lunch. The children seem to want so much attention." MTR1 reassured her that this was fine and helped MTE1 find a space beside her. MTE1 sat and observed her mentor coordinate lunch with a group of eight children. This situation resulted in providing a model of planning and coordinating a lunch routine, as well as demonstrating how to respond to a

child in a sensitive manner when children respond negatively to a situation. For example, as MTR1 modeled how to coordinate a lunch routine, one of the children became upset and refused to eat lunch. MTR1 responded to the child, by sitting beside him, as she put her arm around him and said, "What is wrong,(child's name)? Would you like to tell me why you are sad?" She ensured that he was not hurt and did not call attention to his refusal to eat. Later, when the other children in her group ate lunch, the child began to taste his meal and commented that the food was good. Child 1 said, "MMMM this is good". MTR1 praised the child, "Good for you, you are trying it, it is good isn't it" as the child continued to eat. Modeling routines like this provided MTE1 with an appropriate model of coordinating lunch routines and demonstrated an appropriate way to respond to children's needs. Occasions like this occurred frequently during the study, where a routine was being modeled by a mentor and a situation arose where the mentor would be required to respond to a unique situation.

When MTR1 modeled planning and coordinating daily routines, she demonstrated a sensitive approach to children. After observing modeling like this, MTE1 often mentioned that, " Now I will feel more comfortable dealing with these particular issues because I have a model to reflect on." However, MTR1 pointed out to her mentee that, "although a strategy may not work in all situations, it is important for teachers to respond sensitively to a child whatever the situation." MTE1 agreed with her mentor and further stated:

I liked how you didn't call attention to the child not eating his lunch. I think that

may be why he tried it later when he saw the other children eating. I was glad that you were handling that situation because I don't think I would have known how to react to the child. I guess in time I might know. Do you think?

MTR1 reassured her that becoming skilled at responding to individual children's behaviours requires time. She stated, "Over the next couple of weeks, there will be many opportunities for you to observe me as I coordinate lunch and snack. I will help you." As the study progressed, MTR1 continued to model snack and lunch routines and MTE1 became confident in planning and coordinating these routines.

Transition time was another routine that was difficult for mentees to plan and coordinate. Transition time was the time when children moved from one routine or activity to another. For example, when children finished outdoor play in the morning, they went indoors for lunch. The time period between outdoor time and lunch, was referred to as a transition time. MTR3 was sensitive to her mentee's anxiety about transition time. An incident depicting such an occasion occurred during Phase I when the children in MTR3's group were playing outdoors. They had been playing in the sand box and on the climber for 30 minutes and it was almost lunch time. MTR3 was aware that the children were very involved in their play and would not want to go indoors for lunch. She approached each child and made eye contact with them, saying:

Five more minutes and we will go inside for lunch. If you want to climb on the climber one more time or build one more sand castle, you need to do it now. I know we have something very special for lunch today and I know you must be

hungry after playing all morning. You will need good food for lunch if you want to have the energy to play again this afternoon.

Later during the day, MTR3 discussed with her mentee the process she followed when moving her children from one routine to another.

MTR3: I gave them [children] five more minutes before they went inside.

Transition time is always important to young children. It prepares them for what is going to happen next, five more minutes we are going to have lunch and we are going to go inside to the exercise area. That gives them the time to finish what they are doing and let's them know what is going to happen.

Whenever possible, MTR3 followed her modeling episodes with an explanation for her actions. Such demonstrations and discussions, which emphasized the importance of a routine for children and the use of specific examples of the language the mentor used to inform the children of the routine, provided a model for the mentee to use when she became responsible for planning and coordinating routines in the children's program.

Through discussions and demonstrations during Phase I, the mentees became comfortable planning and coordinating daily routines. During Phase II, mentees were responsible for planning and implementing curriculum activities with mentor assistance. They expressed concerns about assisting their mentors with these activities. The mentors acknowledged their concerns by modeling strategies and skills related to planning and implementing curriculum activities.

For example, MTR2 became aware of her mentee's concerns through

discussions about teaching practices related to implementing curriculum activities with the children. Based on this information, MTR2 arranged opportunities to model curriculum activities as she introduced and facilitated activities with the children. She took time to discuss and plan the learning activity with her mentee prior to implementation and pointed out strategies and skills for her mentee to observe. Some curriculum activities modeled were: setting up the learning area where the learning activity occurred, choosing materials, encouraging the children to participate, and appropriate language to use with the children throughout the activity.

Throughout the study, MTR2 provided a variety of learning activities focusing on the children's developmental areas, i.e., physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. MTR2 discussed with and demonstrated for MTE2 the importance of meeting the individual needs of children, as well as the needs of the group when planning and implementing learning activities. In addition, consideration was given to choosing a learning activity. Such modeling was evident during Phase II, when the children in MTR2's group talked about picking blueberries over the weekend. MTR2 discussed with her mentee activities they could do with the children to facilitate and expand on their interest in this topic. She stated, "The children are obviously interested in blueberries. I had planned to prepare snack with the children this afternoon, maybe we could make blueberry muffins." The plan was made and they decided to make blueberry muffins and share the book *Blueberries for Sal*, (McCloskey). Before the muffins were made, MTR2 emphasized the areas for her mentee to focus on as she observed the activity, "Notice the

language and math skills the children will be using as I implement the activity.” As MTR2 carried out the activity, the children were involved in math and language skills as they poured and measured ingredients for the muffins. MTR2 talked about measuring and pouring as the children added ingredients and referred to the recipe chart. “Can you show me one cup?” One of the children took the measuring cup and filled it with flour. Next MTR2 asked the children what ingredient would be added next. One of the children said, “eggs”. MTR2 asked, “How many eggs do we add?” One of the children went to the recipe chart and counted, “one, two eggs.” This dialogue continued throughout the activity until all the ingredients were added and the batter was added to the muffin pans. The children posed additional questions for further information. They wanted to know how many muffins they would have for snack and if there would be enough for everyone. MTR2 reassured them that, “there are 24 muffins and 16 children, do you think we will have enough?” The children were content that there would be more than enough. One of the children thought there might be enough for the children in the full-day program. Later, MTE2 noted how her mentor had picked up on the children’s interest in blueberries and the activities her mentor planned to generate additional interest in the topic.

MTE2: I was really impressed when the children came in so excited about going blueberry picking over the weekend. I knew you had planned something else for snack this afternoon but you immediately went with the children’s interests. I guess that’s what the instructors mean when they talk about being flexible with your program plans and meeting the needs of the children.

The book, *Blueberries for Sal*. MTR2 chose to read prior to making muffins. appealed to the children's interest and connected literacy to the activity. Reading books related to the children's interest was a meaningful way to connect literacy to a topic. Reading *Blueberries for Sal* to the children generated interest in dramatic play as the children took turns role playing characters from the book.

After hearing the story and making the muffins the children's interest heightened. MTR2 noted this and expanded the topic by planning a field trip to go blueberry picking. When the children returned they made blueberry jam and created their own story. As the children dictated the story, MTR2 wrote it on a chart. The story was later displayed in the book corner. This modeling of curriculum planning and implementation was a meaningful learning experience for MTE2. She stated:

I don't remember ever seeing a teacher expand on the children's interests in this manner. They were so excited about the field trip that they just had to get their story written down. You picked up on that too. There was so much going on but there was so much learning that I didn't feel confused. I was trying to make notes. I was afraid that I would forget something and this experience is something I know will help me later when I plan and implement activities. I hope the children will be as excited for my activities as they were for this activity.

This experience provided MTE2 the opportunity to observe curriculum activities related to the children's needs and interests being planned and implemented.

Another incident which showed a mentor modeling planning and implementing curriculum activities occurred during Phase II. It focused on individualizing a curriculum plan for a child. MTR4 observed that Child 2 had problems socializing with the other children. She sat alone much of the time and did not interact with the others. MTR4 talked to MTE4 about her observations, stating, "I am concerned about (Child 2's name), she doesn't interact with the other children and hasn't established any friendships. I think it is time to set up some activities that will encourage her to play with other children." On the following day, MTR4 placed large boxes and collage materials in the block corner for a small group activity. MTR4 sat with the children and talked with them about the materials as she encouraged Child 2 to play with the materials.

MTR4: (Child 2's name), would you like to make something with these materials . . . I see Child 3 is making a television. Would you like to help him? I can help also. Would you like to bring your Winnie the Pooh bear to help you?

Child 2 left the area and returned with her Winnie the Pooh. She went to MTR4 and said, "We could put Winnie the Pooh inside the television and we could have a puppet show." She approached Child 3 and asked him if he wanted to have a puppet show. Child 3 agreed and invited two other children to join them. In this situation, MTE4 observed her mentor plan and implement a curriculum activity that focused on an individual child. MTR4 made changes to the activity based on Child 2's needs and interests.

Modeling was a positive mentoring strategy which mentors used to demonstrate

planning and coordinating daily routines and planning and implementing curriculum activities during Phase I and Phase II. Mentors recognized that during these phases, the mentees had not acquired the strategies and skills necessary to demonstrate successfully the development and implementation of curriculum. Therefore, it was necessary that the mentees observe these strategies and skills being modeled in a variety of situations.

Mentors Modeling Effective Guidance Strategies and Skills

Throughout the study, mentees were responsible for demonstrating strategies and skills relating to guiding children's behaviours. During Phase I, the researcher noted that the mentees hesitated to intervene when children demonstrated inappropriate behaviours. Mentors observed this hesitancy and discussed the reasons for the hesitation with their mentees'. The mentees said they did not know the children enough to guide their behaviours appropriately. They indicated that they first required time to observe their mentors demonstrate guidance strategies and skills prior to intervening when children behaved inappropriately.

Mentors were aware of their mentees' need to observe them guiding their children's behaviours. Over the duration of the study, the mentors modeled strategies and skills related to guiding children's behaviours on 92 occasions (see Table 7). Each mentor modeled these strategies and skills at different frequencies. For example, MTR1 and MTR3, in the full-day program, modeled guidance strategies and skills more often

than MTR2 and MTR4 in the half-day program (see Table 7). At least, three factors influenced this difference. One, there were more children in the full-day program: two, these children were in child care for a full-day as opposed to a half-day; and three, MTR2 was absent a great deal of time during Phase II and Phase III.

Guidance strategies and skills were modeled most often during Phase I and Phase II (see Table 7). It was during this time that the mentees expressed concern about not having the necessary skills to intervene when children demonstrated inappropriate behaviours. Mentors recognized the need for mentees to first observe them when they modeled appropriate guidance strategies and skills before being expected to demonstrate them later during Phase II and during Phase III.

While the children in the full-day and half-day programs were learning to develop self-control, there were many occasions during this learning process, when they needed guidance. These occasions provided opportunities for mentors to model guidance strategies and skills for their mentees. When mentors guided children's behaviours, they demonstrated a sensitive manner with children. In this regard, MTR1 modeled guidance strategies and skills as she worked with the children by following through with consequences to their behaviours and redirecting the children's behaviours. For instance during conflict situations between children, she redirected the child who behaved inappropriately, by saying, "When you need to squeeze or hit something, you can squeeze or hit a pillow but I can't let you squeeze [child's name]." On another occasion, Child 3 sat a toy dinosaur on Child 4's paper. Child 4 screamed and became very upset, and in

response to this. MTR1 went over to her and put her arms around her to comfort her.

After, she went to Child 3 and asked her to take the toy dinosaur away.

MTR1: Child 4 doesn't want the dinosaur on her paper, can you find another place to put it? [MTR1 was aware that Child 4 was having a difficult day so she demonstrated sensitivity to the child as she redirected Child 3 to find another place for her dinosaur.] Child 4 is sad today and wants to be alone. She doesn't want you to play with her, but I can see you would like a friend to play with. I can help you find another space for your dinosaur. I see Child 5 is playing in the block corner, would you like for me to check and see if he would like to play with you?

MTR1 was calm but firm in situations like these. She always positioned herself whereby she was making eye contact with the child before speaking. She also followed through with an explanation to her mentee, "Sometimes children don't want to share their space with another child, especially when they are having a bad day. It is important for teachers to be aware of this and to help children respect other children's feelings. Young children need help with this sometimes." MTR2 often modeled a problem solving strategy with children who had problems controlling their behaviours. During Phase II when Child 6 insisted on climbing over the furniture, MTR2 reminded him that this was dangerous and she did not want him to hurt himself. When this approach was unsuccessful and the child continued to climb over the furniture, MTR2 sat with the child and discussed the situation to generate solutions. "(Child 6's name), I can not let

you climb over the furniture, it is dangerous. Can you think of other ways to get to the activity areas without climbing on the furniture? Let's make a list of other ways". Child 6 was interested in generating solutions to this problem and made several suggestions such as "I could make a rocket and fly to the block corner. I could walk around the furniture and that would be safer. My mom and dad would be sad if I hurt myself." MTR2 made a list of the child's solutions and praised the child for solving the problem and suggesting ways to move from area to area, "I think walking around the furniture is a good idea and you are right, it would be safer. Your mom and dad would be sad if you hurt yourself." MTE2 observed this process and commented, "I read about this technique in my textbook but I have not observed it before today." She was amazed at the child's willingness to generate solutions. Such modeling helped to connect theory and practice for MTE2 as she observed her mentor model a guidance strategy she had learned through her course work.

MTR3 modeled guidance strategies and skills for her mentee on many occasions. During Phase II, MTR3 and her mentee were in the playground area with a group of children. MTE3 was with a small group of children who were busy mixing a potion they referred to as pineapple juice. MTR3 was in another area of the garden with another group of children. One of the children [Child 7] who was with MTE3 pushed another child, [Child 8] who fell down and cried. MTE3 immediately went to comfort Child 8 and picked her up and put her arms around her, and asked "Are you alright (child 8's name), did you hurt yourself?" When the child stopped crying and responded, "Yes,

Child 7 hurt me and I want my mommy”, MTE3 called to her mentor to help with Child 7. She looked upset and worried when she was not sure her mentor had heard her or if she would come to her rescue. MTR3 did hear her and came immediately to intervene in the situation. She knelt down to Child 7’s eye level and talked to him.

MTR3: What happened?

Child 7: I don’t want her [refers to Child 8] in my house . . . so she wouldn’t listen and I pushed her [Child 7 cries].

MTR3: You need to use your words and if Child 8 doesn’t listen, then you should ask your teacher to help. Pushing hurts and now Child 8 is sad. What will you do the next time another child doesn’t listen to you?

Together they brainstormed solutions for a similar incident. Child 7 was very articulate about what he would do the next time and he went to tell Child 8 that he was sorry.

MTE3 observed this situation with interest and enthusiasm. She talked to her mentor soon after the situation was over.

MTE3: I was worried when I thought that I might have to intervene with Child 7.

I admit I am intimidated by (child 7’s name), because I have seen him behave inappropriately on many occasions and he makes me anxious. I was amazed at your calm, sensitive manner when you talked to the children. You didn’t get upset, that was amazing, especially when (child 7’s name) challenged you during the problem solving session.

MTR3 reassured her mentee that it was not always easy to guide children’s

behaviour and some children were more challenging than others. However, getting upset or angry with a child who was already angry and upset would not help the child resolve his anger and frustration and would not assist him to gain self-control.

MTR3: It is important to remain in control because these children have not developed self control yet. (Child 7's name) is only 4 years old and he is learning about self control. Do you notice times when his behaviour is controlled? I try to comment on those occasions and let him know that this is great...and he responds with confidence in himself. Occasions like these let us know that he isn't quite there yet. He is still learning about control and our role is to help him and all the children.

MTR3 seemed to welcome opportunities to model appropriate guidance strategies and skills for her mentee. She did not need to worry about not having opportunities to model numerous guidance skills because there were many. Although each situation and child was unique, there were many similarities to the other skills modeled by MTR3 during the study.

Another guiding behaviour modeled by mentors was related to children's safety. MTR4 demonstrated such behaviour when the children were playing at the water play table. Child 9 was running from the water play table to the sand table, carrying a container of water. As she ran, water splashed over the floor and the area became quite dangerous. MTE4 observed MTR4 approach Child 9 and redirect her behaviour. MTR4 put her arm around the child and said:

(Child 9's name), the floor is getting very wet and other children are falling. I need you to keep the water in the water play table. When we go outdoors later, you can carry water from the water table to the sand box. It will be safe to do that outdoors. It isn't safe here in the playroom.

MTE4 commented later, "The children listen to you. I don't think she would have listened to me if I had intervened that time." MTR4 reassured her mentee that the children will listen to her when they are more familiar with her. MTR4 said:

Students always comment about the children not listening to them especially at the beginning of the field placement. But they always comment at the end of the placement that the children begin to view them as real teachers. It takes time for the children to be comfortable with you.

MTE4 was relieved to know that students in previous years had similar experiences during the beginning of their placements. She was reassured when MTR4 informed her that in the past, once the children became comfortable with the students, the children listened and responded to them in the same way as their teachers.

Mentors Coaching Strategies and Skills

Coaching in the context of this study referred to the occasions when mentors provided assistance and instruction to their mentees as they planned and implemented curriculum activities or guided children's behaviours. From the discussions between the mentors and their mentees, as well as the mentors' observations of the mentees'

interactions with the children, the mentors recognized that although the mentees were interested in planning and implementing curriculum activities, they were also nervous about doing the entire activity without assistance. In addition, although the mentees expressed enthusiasm about guiding the children's behaviours, they insisted that they required mentor assistance until they were more confident intervening when children behaved inappropriately.

The researcher observed that such coaching occurred more in Phase II than Phase I or Phase III (see Table 8). This difference was influenced by two factors: planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours. Throughout the study, all of the mentors spent time coaching a variety of curriculum activities and guidance skills with their mentees. As Table 8 indicates, some mentors coached more than others. Since MTR2 was absent for part of Phase II and throughout Phase III, the number of coaching sessions was less for her during this time than for the other mentors. Coaching occurred on 113 occasions throughout the study. Mentors coached the mentees to plan and implement curriculum activities on 63 occasions and they coached guidance strategies and skills, related to guiding children's behaviours, on 50 occasions (see Table 8).

Table 8. Mentor Coaching Strategies and Skills

MTR	Planning & Implementing Curriculum Activities			Guiding Children's Behaviours		
	Phase			Phase		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
1	0	17	4	2	9	0
2	0	7	0	2	5	0
3	4	17	5	4	20	2
4	0	7	2	0	3	3
Subtotal	4	48	11	8	37	5
Total	63			50		

Mentors Coach Planning and Implementing Curriculum Activities

During Phase II, mentees expressed concerns about planning and implementing curriculum activities alone. They discussed these concerns with their mentors and collaboratively made plans whereby their mentor would coach them until they were comfortable planning and implementing curriculum activities without mentor assistance.

Mentor coaching occurred when MTE1 had planned a gross motor activity with the children and she informed MTR1 that she was not sure how to gather the children and generate interest in her activity. Even though she was confident about her activity and materials choice, she required assistance getting started. She also expressed concern about what she would do if the children were not interested in the activity. MTR1 agreed

to coach her mentee to gather the children for the activity and maintain the children's interest during the activity. MTR1 suggested that she gather the children on the carpet first and introduce the activity.

MTR1: I find that when the children are gathered together in an area away from the other activities in the room, there is a tendency for them to become interested in the planned activity. When you show the children some of the materials you will be using during the activity they tend to get more excited about the activity.

Do you want to gather the children now and introduce your activity?

During the implementation of the gross motor activity, some of the children lost interest and wandered to another area of the playroom. MTR1 told her mentee, "call the children back." When the children came back to the area, MTR1 suggested to her mentee that the children may have lost interest because they had to wait a long time for their turn. MTR1 stated, "Maybe you could bring more pylons and ring toss next time. Then the children won't have to wait so long for a turn. I will go and get more while you continue the activity. [MTR1 did not have to leave the area. The materials were stored in a cupboard in the area]. MTR1 went to the cupboard and returned with additional materials. She sat beside MTE1 and gave her the additional materials. MTR1 told her to call the children back who had wandered away when there was not enough materials. MTR1 helped her mentee gather the children and the activity continued.

Coaching allowed MTE1 to implement her activity successfully. She invited the children to join in her activity. When they wandered away, MTR1 told her to call them

back. A coaching experience such as this was sensitive to MTE1's needs. MTR1 recognized that her mentee needed assistance and instruction and she responded in an appropriate manner. MTE1 realized that the success of her activity was dependent on her mentor's coaching. Coaching, such as this provided a learning experience for MTE1 related to the importance of being prepared prior to implementing a gross motor activity. It was coaching experiences of this nature during Phase II. that led MTE1 to become comfortable planning and implementing other curriculum activities during Phase III.

Another example of a mentor coaching her mentee to plan and implement a curriculum activity occurred during Phase II. MTE2 planned collaboratively with MTR2 to take a group of children on a nature walk and involve the children in learning activities related to nature. During their planning discussion, MTR2 told her mentee, "I will be available during the nature walk and the activities following the nature walk to assist you." While the children and teachers were on their nature walk, the children collected branches and leaves to make individual nature collages. MTR2 assisted and instructed her mentee to gather the children together in a circle to talk about their walk and the items they had collected.

MTR2: The first thing you need to do is gather the children together in the block corner to talk about their walk. Tell the children to bring the items they collected on their walk to the block corner. The block corner is best because there is a bulletin board there that the children can use to display their collage materials. It is important to ask the children questions related to the materials they collected.

For example, you should ask them to tell you about the leaves. Where did you find them? What can you do with them? Make statements about the materials . . . You could say that the leaves have interesting colors . . . and there seems to be more golden leaves than red leaves. Ask them [the children] to sort them [the leaves] by color. You can get started now because the children are here and they look excited.

Use of descriptive language was an area in which MTE2 needed instruction. She was quiet and was not always comfortable interacting with the children. However, when MTR2 instructed her to use descriptive language with the children and gave some examples that she could use, MTE2 initiated descriptive discussion with the children. She asked questions and made comments about the materials the children collected.

MTE2 said:

I see you collected twigs and berries. Can you tell me about them. I also see interesting colors in the leaves and I see (child 2's name) feeling the bumps on the berries. What are those bumps? Can you feel them again?

As MTE2 interacted with the children, they responded to her questions and presented additional ones. The researcher observed the children were comfortable with MTE2 as they responded to her questions.

Activities of this nature encouraged MTE2 to initiate and facilitate activities for children without coaching. Coaching was therefore an effective strategy for MTR2 to use with her mentee, in light of her mentee's reservations about interacting with the children.

Coaching prompted MTE2 to interact with the children as she implemented the activity. MTR2 talked with her mentee at the end of the session and provided feedback on how the activity went. She stated:

I can see that you are becoming more relaxed interacting with the children and they [children] are more comfortable with you. They were enthusiastic when you were interacting with them about the collage materials. I think they were picking up on your excitement.

MTE2 was pleased with the children's reactions and felt that she had been successful implementing the activity with her mentor's coaching. She indicated that she was surprised that she was so comfortable interacting with the children.

MTE2: I was pleased with how the nature walk went and with the collage activity. I was glad you were there to help me. I don't think I am ready yet to implement activities without assistance, but I feel I am doing a lot better than a couple of weeks ago.

MTR3 coached MTE3 when MTE3 voiced concerns regarding children's demands on her.

MTE3 : I find the children are demanding and I don't know how to respond to their demands and do my creative activity as well. I will need your help.

MTR3 responded to her mentee's concerns:

I will sit beside you as you implement your activity. I will also make suggestions as you are setting up the activity. For example, how many children are you

planning to have participate in the activity and how will the children know that there is a limit on numbers?

MTE3: I hadn't thought about setting limits on numbers, but I guess that is a good idea. I wouldn't want any more than six children. What do you think?

MTR3: Six is a good number but how will the children know that you have space for only six children? What clue will you give?

MTE3: Well, I noticed that you put a certain number of chairs around the table when you have done an activity. Then when the chairs were occupied you told the children that the spaces were filled. I could do something like that.

MTR3 agreed that this would be an appropriate implementation strategy. In addition, it ensured that MTE3 controlled the activity. She said:

That sounds like a good plan. Then you will have more control over your activity. Controlling the number of children participating in an activity is a good plan to ensure that things don't get out of control as you implement the activity. You mentioned that you were anxious about the children being demanding. I think that when you have larger numbers of children participating in an activity it can be demanding. However, I find that when the numbers are lower the teacher has more control over the activity and the children benefit.

Coaching during the planning stage helped MTE3 to develop a plan regarding effective implementation of curriculum learning activities. During Phase II, MTR3 often coached her mentee during the planning stage to ensure that her mentee was prepared to

implement her curriculum activity. In addition, during the implementation of MTE3's activities, MTR3 sat beside her assisting and instructing when necessary. MTE3 was often nervous prior to implementing curriculum activities, but later showed confidence when her mentor was sitting beside her, ready to advise and assist her when necessary.

During Phase II, MTE4 expressed her anxiety about the necessity of planning and implementing curriculum activities. MTR4 responded to her anxiety by coaching her when she implemented one of her curriculum activities. MTE4 had planned to involve her children in a group time activity that focused on language development. She brought a variety of animal pictures and the book A House Is A House For Me (Hoberman) to share with the children. MTR4 sat beside MTE4 as she gathered the children in the book corner. She took out each animal picture individually and held it for the children to see. She encouraged the children to identify the picture and share their knowledge about the animals. When she held the picture of the bear, several of the children became very excited and shouted, "Bear, Bear" several times. The other children were distracted and began to move away from the area. MTE4 was not sure how to respond to the children and regain their attention. MTR4 recognized her mentee's dilemma and moved closer to the children as she said, "MTE4 cannot hear and the other children can not hear. Can you sit back on the carpet because MTE4 has more animal pictures to show you." When the children sat down, MTR4 moved back and signaled MTE4 to continue. MTE4 continued to select animal pictures and discuss them with the children. Shortly after, the children became restless again. Without mentor coaching MTE4 reminded the children to sit on

their carpet, “I need you to sit on your carpet. The other children can’t see when you are standing.” MTR4 smiled at her and nodded to indicate that this approach was appropriate. When MTE4 finished showing the pictures to the children, she intended to read A House Is A House For Me to the children. However, MTR4 moved closer to her mentee and reminded her, “The children have been sitting for 20 minutes. I think it might be too much to expect them to sit for another 10 minutes. Do you think?” MTE4 agreed and wondered if she could read it at circle time, later during the morning. MTR4 replied, “Yes, that is a good idea. Circle time would be a great time to share the book with the children.”

This experience was instrumental to encouraging MTE4 to implement other curriculum activities during Phase II, with her mentor’s assistance. When MTR4 praised MTE4 for the language activity that she implemented, she stated:

I expected that you would need help when the children got restless. You didn’t have the experience necessary to implement the activity without assistance. That will come with time and experience. I will be assisting you for the next week or two and then you will be ready to implement activities without my assistance.

Mentors Coach Effective Guidance Strategies and Skills

MTR3 coached her mentee to guide the children’s behaviours more often than any of the other mentors in the study (see Table 8). The majority of these coaching episodes occurred during Phase II. This was the time when MTE3 indicated that she was nervous

when children behaved inappropriately and she lacked confidence to intervene in those situations. MTR3 recognized that her mentee would need assistance in this area and that she would need to demonstrate guidance skills before the end of the study. She had modeled these skills during Phase I and the beginning of Phase II, however, MTE3 continued to express anxiety about spontaneously intervening when children demonstrated challenging behaviours. During the second week of Phase II, MTR3 talked to her mentee about what they could do collaboratively to ensure she developed appropriate guidance strategies and skills.. They discussed this during their conferences, however discussion without some plan to progress to the next step was not helpful. Therefore, MTR3 and MTE3 developed a plan regarding effective intervention strategies related to children's behavioural problems.

During Phase II, there were many occasions for MTE3 to use the different intervention strategies to guide children's behaviours. One incident occurred while she sat with a group of children at the play dough table and MTR3 observed her. Child 10 held a small plastic hammer and attempted to hit Child 11 with the hammer. MTE3 intervened immediately, telling Child 10 that the hammer could hurt Child 11. When she reached to put her arm around Child 10, he pulled away and tried to hit her. MTE3 appeared to be upset, however, she continued to talk to Child 10 and made eye contact with him. Child 10 was not interested in talking and avoided looking at MTE3. MTR3 was observing this interaction and made eye contact with her mentee, who responded, "Help, I am not sure what to do now. He isn't listening and this isn't working." MTR3 approached Child 10

and put her arm around him (gently) and made eye contact with him. MTR3 said, "The hammer can hurt (Child 11's name). We can't let you hurt the children. You can use the hammer to punch the play dough. I can help you find a space and some play dough." MTR3 noticed that the hammer was broken. She turned to MTE3 and told her to ask (Child 10's name) if he would you like for her [MTE3] to help him fix the hammer. MTR3 suggested that once the hammer was fixed, MTE3 should help him [Child 10's name] find some play dough or any appropriate material to punch. This would redirect the child's inappropriate behaviour. When MTE3 asked Child 10, "Would you like for me to help you fix the hammer?" he replied, "I would like to fix it if you help me" [Child 10 smiles].

Later when MTR3 and MTE3 discussed the behavioural incident, MTE3 noted how her mentor addressed the problem by telling the child that she would not let him hurt another child, however, she did redirect the child to use the hammer to punch the play dough instead of the other child. She appreciated the instruction MTR3 provided about helping the child fix the hammer and redirecting his inappropriate behaviour. MTE3 also noted that her mentor was very calm and reassuring to the child. MTE3 thought that she was probably too quick to make contact with the child (pulling him towards her) and this may have caused the child to resist and initiate more aggression by trying to hit her. She said, "Next time I will move in close to the child but I will not initiate moving too close and touching him; this could be intimidating for the child.

MTR3 assisted and instructed MTE3 to demonstrate guidance strategies and skills

like this during Phase II because she recognized that MTE3 did not yet have these skills. In addition, MTE3 would be required to demonstrate these skills later during Phase II and throughout Phase III without assistance and instruction. Therefore, coaching was an effective mentoring strategy to promote MTE3's use of guidance strategies and skills in a non-threatening and supportive environment.

Several occasions arose where MTR1 coached MTE1 to guide the children's behaviours. On 11 occasions, she was aware that her mentee needed help as she struggled to intervene in an appropriate manner to guide the children's behaviours. During Phase II, a challenging situation arose that involved a group of children during snack time. MTR4 was assisting MTE4 to coordinate snack routine when she had to leave to help a child in the bathroom. While she was away, Child 1 became angry because her chair tipped over and the other children laughed. MTE4 helped Child 1 off the floor and picked up her chair. She also checked to ensure Child 1 was not hurt. Child 1 began screaming and throwing dishes at the other children. She hit several of the children during this time. MTE4 tried to intervene but each time she tried to get close to her, Child 1 kicked and screamed. MTE4 left Child 1 and went to the other children to ensure they were not hurt by the thrown dishes. Noting the children were unharmed, MTE4 approached Child 1. Child 1 continued to scream, "Get away from me, you're not my teacher." MTE4 replied, "No, I'm not your teacher but I care about you and I want to make sure you are okay." At this point, MTR4 arrived back in the area and Child 1 immediately ran to her.

MTR4: What happened (Child 1's name)? Why are you screaming?

Child 1: I fell and the kids laughed at me and she's [MTE4] not my teacher . I want you to sit with me. I don't want her [refers to MTE4].

MTE4 approached MTR4 and briefly told her what had happened. MTR4 replied.

"sounds like you did all the right things. It is important that (Child 1's name) understands that you are a teacher. You will need to follow through with (Child 1's name) but first I will talk to her. I will give you a signal when I am finished and then I want you to tell her that throwing things can hurt other children. It is okay to scream but it's not okay to throw things. I will speak with her [Child 1] first.

MTR4: MTE4 is your teacher also. She helps me teach. I help her to teach. She was concerned that you might be hurt. Can you talk to MTE4 about what happened. I will stay here close-by.

[Child 1 approached MTE4] and said: I'm sorry but I wanted my teacher.

MTE4: I know you wanted (MTR4's name) but she was busy and I was trying to help you. I was worried that you were hurt and I was worried that you would hurt the other children. Throwing things can hurt others. It's okay to be angry and it's okay to scream but it's not okay to throw things at the other children. Do you understand (Child 1's name)?

Child 1: I'm sorry but they laughed and it wasn't funny. They always laugh at me when I fall.

MTE4: It isn't nice when someone laughs when you are hurt. I will talk to the

children and tell them how you felt. Okay. Now let's pick up the dishes and put them on the trolley.

MTR4 observed the situation and as MTE4 spoke, MTR4 kept eye contact with (Child 1's name). This strategy was helpful, especially when MTE4 spoke to (Child 1's name).

MTR4 reaffirmed the seriousness of the situation and ensured that if (Child 1's name) did not listen to MTE4, she would intervene.

Situations that required guidance of children's behaviours were common with the young children. They often rebelled against the mentees in favor of the mentors.

However, it was important in these situations that the mentors informed the children of the mentees' role, as MTR4 did in the last cited situation. MTR4 was always respectful of her mentee's role and this example provided evidence of that respect. MTR4 did not expect MTE4 to deal with this situation without assistance and instruction. When MTE4 had opportunities of this nature, she practiced behavioural interventions, increasing her confidence at guiding children's behaviours in a variety of situations.

Although MTR2 and MTR4 did coach their mentees to guide children's behaviours on several occasions, the occurrences were minimal (see Table 8). The main reason for this limited coaching was that they were in the half-day program. Also, MTR2 was absent a great deal of time during Phase II and Phase III.

Summary

Modeling was an effective mentoring strategy that was used by all mentors throughout the study. However, it was used most during Phase I and week one of Phase II of the study (see Table 7). When the mentors modeled, they demonstrated effective strategies and skills for planning and coordinating daily routines, planning and implementing curriculum activities, and guiding children's behaviours.

Over the duration of the study, mentors modeled strategies and skills related to planning and coordinating daily routines, and planning and implementing curriculum activities 236 times, while they modeled guiding children's behaviours on 92 occasions. MTR1 and MTR3, in the full-day program, modeled strategies and skills related to guiding children's behaviours more frequently than MTR2 and MTR4 in the half-day program. Children in the half-day program did not display the frequency of inappropriate behaviours that were displayed in the full-day program, therefore, mentors in the half-day program did not have the same opportunities to model guidance strategies and skills. All mentees responded positively to mentor modeling. They maintained that observing the mentors demonstrate how to plan and coordinate daily routines, and plan and implement curriculum activities and guidance strategies and skills was a prerequisite to their practicing of these strategies and skills.

During the study, mentors coached strategies and skills related to planning and implementing curriculum activities 63 times, while they coached guiding children's behaviours on 50 occasions. However, it was demonstrated most frequently during

Phase II (see Table 8). It was during this time that the mentees were expected to begin practicing and demonstrating skills related to planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours. MTR1 and MTR3, in the full-day program, demonstrated coaching strategies and skills on 84 occasions, whereas MTR2 and MTR4, in the half-day program demonstrated these strategies and skills 29 times. The low frequency of coaching behaviours for mentors in the half-day program was due to MTR2 being absent a great deal of time during Phase II, when coaching occurred most often. However, this does not explain the rationale for MTR4's low frequency of coaching behaviours (see Table 8). Mentors coaching mentees as they planned and implemented curriculum activities and guided children's behaviours was an important step prior to the mentees having to demonstrate these strategies and skills without mentor assistance and instruction.

Conferences: An Appropriate Strategy To Promote and Encourage Reflective Thinking

The analysis of the transcriptions of the audiotapes and the researcher's descriptive field notes of the conference discussions with each mentor and mentee pair revealed that conferencing was effective in promoting and encouraging reflective feedback in relation to early childhood education teaching practices. When mentors observed the mentees during the day, they noted their use of specific teaching and guidance strategies and skills. Therefore, when mentors provided reflective feedback it was focused on the strategies and skills demonstrated as the mentees planned and

implemented curriculum activities and guided children's behaviours. Although reflective feedback was provided on specific teaching practices, the researcher did not provide an outline to guide the conference discussions.

When mentors, through conference discussions, questions, and suggestions, encouraged the mentees to reflect on teaching practices, they reflected on their teaching practices and teaching philosophy, as well as the teaching practices of their mentees. When mentors reflected on their teaching practices in this manner, they were able to provide enhanced reflective feedback specific to the mentees teaching practices. Therefore, when mentees received reflective feedback on their teaching practices, they were encouraged to become reflective thinkers. As well, when mentors reflected on their teaching practices and philosophy, and gave reflective feedback to the mentees, the mentors became reflective thinkers. In addition, the mentors' and mentees' teaching practices were enhanced. The analysis of the conference discussions identified, in addition, several mentor qualities which created a non-threatening environment which fostered mentor and mentee reflective thinking.

Mentors Encourage Reflective Thinking As They Provide Reflective Feedback

Reflective feedback in the context of this study referred to the mentors' reflections of their daily observations of the mentees. These observations focused on the mentees planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours. Such reflections encouraged the mentees to reflect on their daily teaching practices.

Reflective feedback that focused on the mentees' teaching practices fostered their self-esteem and confidence, as well, promoted reflective practices. The researcher noted that as the mentors reflected on their and/or their mentees' teaching practices, they incorporated this reflection into their teaching practices. Mentors demonstrated enhanced reflective teaching practices as they planned and implemented curriculum activities and guided children's behaviours. Table 9 shows reflective feedback relating to the planning and implementing curriculum activities occurred on 283 occasions, whereas feedback relating to guiding children's behaviours occurred on 159 occasions.

Table 9. Reflective Feedback

MTR	Planning and Implementing Curriculum Activities	Guiding Children's Behaviours
1	92	67
2	32	6
3	96	69
4	63	17
Total	283	159

The number of occasions reflective feedback was given by the mentors varied. The mentors in the full-day program, MTR1 and MTR3 provided more reflective feedback on planning and implementing curriculum activities, and guiding children's behaviours than their counterparts, MTR2 and MTR4, in the half-day program. The main reason for this was MTE1 and MTE3 worked with their mentors for a full-day, as

compared to MTE2 and MTE4, who worked with their mentors for a half-day. Therefore, MTR1 and MTR3 had more situations to reflect on than MTR2 and MTR4. In addition, MTR2 was absent a great deal of time during Phase II and Phase III. This would account for the overall low frequency of feedback provided to her mentee throughout the study. With respect to the low frequency of feedback provided on guiding children's behaviours by the mentors in the half-day program, one of the main reasons for the low frequency was the time duration of the program, i.e., half-day.

Reflective Feedback on Planning and Implementing Curriculum Activities

During the study, mentors were responsible for providing reflective feedback to the mentees about strategies and skills that would improve their teaching practices. Such feedback was focused on planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours. Mentors reflected on their teaching practices as they posed questions, made suggestions, and provided feedback to the mentees on their teaching practices.

During Phase II and Phase III, MTE1 planned and implemented a variety of curriculum activities. Providing feedback in a sensitive manner by MTR1 during this time was critical in building her mentee's confidence in planning and implementing curriculum activities. As well, when MTE1 became more confident demonstrating strategies and skills related to her teaching practices, the researcher noted that MTE1 incorporated reflective feedback into her daily teaching practices. When this occurred

MTE1 was observed adjusting her teaching practices to meet the individual needs of children. As MTR1 provided reflective feedback, she also encouraged MTE1 to reflect on her activities and bring new insights to her future teaching practices.

MTR1 wrote notes during the day as she observed her mentee implement curriculum activities. Having these notes to refer to while providing feedback was imperative to MTR1 providing feedback that was specific to each curriculum activity. This also ensured that she did not have to rely totally on her memory. As well, this explained the rich examples she provided to MTE1 when she gave feedback. Evidence depicting such feedback occurred during Phase II, Conference 19, when MTR1 provided feedback to her mentee related to a language activity that she had carried out earlier in the day.

MTR1: Before group time you [MTE1] asked if it was okay to use your picture file and bring your book for group time and I mentioned it was okay. It went really well and it related to what you talked about in your planning last day. You talked about your animals and your picture file and how they were interested in animals. And the picture file was wonderful, you did a really good job. Your pictures were so big and they were very bright, the illustrations were so appropriate. Actually some of them [children] were talking about them later on. They were talking about the zebra, (Child 12's name) was talking about the black stripes on the zebra and he was the one who commented on it this morning. During your story

you had a really clear tone of voice. Your facial expressions were relating to the characters and to the plot of the story. I liked that book because it wasn't overly long, it just had some words on each page, just one or two sentences. It had all the different animals, and what was interesting is that it had some of the animals that you had in the picture file. And the children were involved in setting it up and I liked when you encouraged the children to come over to set up. I made a comment here, lets talk about how the activity extended to other curriculum areas. [MTE1 smiled and acknowledged the feedback from MTR1]

MTE1: I felt comfortable with the children today. I enjoyed reading to the children. It gave me an opportunity to observe their language skills. I noticed (Child 12's name) was so interested in the picture of the zebra. He wanted to hold it in his hand while I selected other animal pictures. Maybe I could plan something for next week related to animals. This group were certainly interested in the pictures. Do you think they might be interested in another activity about animals? I will think about another activity for next week.

MTR1 was always very specific with her feedback and gave specific examples to illustrate her views and opinions. In this vignette, she included feedback on how her mentee's discussion on planning the previous day linked to this particular activity and the children's interests, "and it related towards what you talked about in your planning last day, you talked about your animals and your picture file and how they [children] were

interested in animals." Such feedback that linked the mentees' curriculum activities back to planning was very important for the mentees because they were just beginning to think about the importance of linking curriculum activities for children with the children's interests.

Previous to Phase II, mentees planned curriculum activities with other mentees, thus they did not have a planning model which included linking curriculum activities to children's interests. Mentors noticing and providing feedback to mentees was critical to mentees' understanding the rationale for linking planning to children's interests and their planned activities. Opportunities of this nature continued during Phase III. However, they were less frequent because the mentees were in field placement only one day a week during this Phase. Phase III provided additional opportunities for the mentees to practice the strategies and skills they had learned during Phase I and Phase II, and become more effective and confident mentees. The researcher noted that as a result of conference discussions which focused on mentors providing reflective feedback to the mentees on teaching practices, they both demonstrated an awareness of effective teaching practices.

Reflective feedback was a supportive strategy for mentees, particularly when they lacked confidence in the quality of their teaching practices. MTE2 was extremely nervous about implementing her activities and required feedback after each activity. She expressed disappointment when her mentor was absent from her mentor role. She said:

I find a big difference when MTR2 is not here to support me and give feedback. I was not sure if what I was doing was okay or if I should have done something

different . . . when I did not receive feedback.

The feedback that was provided earlier during the study was helpful but she would have liked to have had feedback continuing throughout the study.

Although MTR2 had limited conference time with MTE2, she did provide reflective feedback when present. A conference setting, during Phase II, Conference 10, illustrated MTR2 providing feedback and making suggestions on how her mentee should respond to children when she was puzzled or unsure of an appropriate response to their questions. Making suggestions was a strategy which MTR2 frequently used as she provided feedback to her mentee. On this occasion, MTR2 observed her mentee facilitating a language activity with a group of children.

MTR2: Your activity today with the fish puppet and the story went really well. It was nice that you did it in a small group rather than a larger group of children. They all got to hold the puppet and play with it for a while. And they talked about the color and then you introduced the book and read the story. So how do you feel it went?

MTE2: I was pleased with the activity, but I was not sure of what (Child 13's name) was saying and I didn't know if I should keep saying "what" every time I didn't understand him. I found that frustrating. I was glad when you suggested that he draw what he was trying to say. That was a good idea and it is one that I will use later, when the situation arises. The children enjoyed the book The Rainbow Fish (Pfister). One of the children got so excited when the Rainbow

Fish shared his scales, he started clapping his hands and then all of the children clapped. I left the book in the book corner all day. I must have read it about ten times during the day. I think I will bring in more books next week about sharing because the children enjoyed that one so much. They would probably enjoy others. I think another activity that would be appropriate for next week would be to have the children make their own rainbow fish puppets. I could get some sparkles and bring them in. What do you think?

MTR2: I think that it would be really nice if they [children] had more books on fish. They liked the story about the fish. We usually have a theme centered on fish and marine life so if you could bring it back again next week, that would be great. The book can be there and they can make the fish puppets. It might be a nice extension to what you did today. I like how you connect the children's interests to your planning.

Reflective feedback like this not only supported MTE2's activities but also extended her knowledge about additional curriculum activities that would extend on the children's interests. It also invited MTE2 to reflect on the effectiveness of her teaching practices. The researcher noted that this ongoing process of reflective feedback and suggestions promoted positive curriculum changes to occur. For example, there was an increase in MTE2's awareness of the children's needs and interests during the following weeks when she was observed by the researcher, implementing the suggestions that MTR2 had made during Phase II, Conference 10. It was apparent that MTE2 was open to

learning throughout the study and found occasions, such as this conference, to bring new insights to her teaching practices.

MTR3 encouraged MTE3 to write notes throughout the day for purposes of asking questions or making comments about her work with the children during conference time. This method of mentee self- reflection was often a starting point for MTR3 and MTE3 to begin their discussion during conferences. This was the case during Phase II, Conference 10, when MTE3 reflected on an activity she implemented, but experienced problems as she introduced it. The situation was typical for all mentees especially when they first took responsibility for planning and implementing curriculum activities.

MTE3: I found this morning when I came in, the children asked about the play dough and before I got a chance to start it, I realized that I needed a recipe. Then parents arrived, a new student was brought in, and the children went to the block area. I became involved with an activity in the block area so my plans were lost and before I knew it, there was a crowd around. I became confused and I wasn't sure of what to do. Maybe if I had been more organized? It does get confusing when the room gets busy. I know that I should have followed through with my plans. The children were looking forward to making play dough and then they didn't get to do it.

MTR3 listened attentively and responded sensitively to her mentee. She had made notes about the morning and this particular situation. She referred to her notes as she asked questions and made suggestions about how the activity might be successful the next time.

MTR3: What do you think happened? Was there something you could have done differently that would have made your activity successful?

MTE3: I know that I should have had the materials and space organized. I didn't think to do it first thing in the morning when I arrived. That would have made a big difference.

MTR3: Maybe what you could have done is you could have called me the night before. It really helps to be prepared before you come in to the room. It adds to the confusion when you are going around trying to find all the things you need. I can show you where things are when you plan ahead. When you observed the teachers here at the center plan and implement activities, did you notice how they organize the materials and space before they gather the children to participate in the activity? I always give the children time to get acquainted with the materials before I begin the activity. My plan provides guidelines but I am flexible also. Does that make sense? It is difficult sometimes getting an activity started, however it is even more difficult when you are not prepared. Curriculum materials and the space to implement the activity must be planned and organized.

Conference discussions like this provided the mentor and the mentee a natural and compelling context for reflection. In this vignette, MTR3 and MTE3 reflected on their work with children. MTE3 reflected on an activity that was planned but did not materialize successfully. She described the scenario as she reflected on the reasons why it was not successful. As MTR3 posed reflective questions to her mentee about her activity, she engaged MTE3 in discussion about what happened during the curriculum activity, and encouraged her to identify strategies and skills that will be effective in similar teaching situations. MTR3 reflected on her teaching practices and encouraged her mentee to think about these practices as a model for future teaching practices. When discussions such as this occurred during conferences, MTR3 and MTE3 benefit. MTE3 learned new strategies and skills related to planning and implementing curriculum activities, whereas, MTR3 was provided an opportunity to reflect on specific teaching practices. The researcher noted that during the following weeks, MTR3 was cognizant of planning and implementing curriculum activities in an effective manner. In addition, she emphasized the importance of organizing the curriculum materials and space prior to gathering the children. Therefore, providing reflective feedback enhanced the quality of MTR3's teaching practices, as well the teaching practices of MTE3.

Throughout Phase II and Phase III, MTR4 encouraged her mentee to reflect on her observations of the children prior to planning activities for them. When these child observations were included in conference discussions, MTR4 and MTE4 followed a process which ensured that curriculum activities were linked to the children's interests

and developmental stages. MTR4 modeled this process throughout the study as she planned curriculum in the context of children's interests and developmental stages. During Phase II, Conference 17, MTR4 encouraged her mentee to include written samples of child observations during their next planning meeting. She emphasized the importance of including information about individual children during planning meetings.

MTR4: We have a planning meeting tomorrow. This [child observations] would be a great thing to bring in to your planning meeting. The situations we have observed today . . . your notes [reflections] will be important to include. . . . We can talk about them further then. You will notice that people [other early childhood educators and students] will generate ideas from your observations and theirs . . . and we can come up with curriculum plans based on the children's interests. I will observe to see what you have taken [observed] from the room this week because this is a critical part of planning. Observing children and bringing these observations into planning is an important aspect of a quality early childhood education curriculum.

Such opportunities for reflection were instrumental in bridging the gap between curriculum activities and appropriate planning which considered the interests and developmental stages of children. These gaps became less frequent as MTR4 and MTE4 reflected on children's needs and interests during curriculum planning.

One of MTR4's goals for MTE4 was that she plan appropriate activities for

children, based on their interests and developmental stages. MTR4 encouraged her mentee to discuss her curriculum plans and the rationale for those plans during conferences. When MTE4 discussed her plans to implement a gross motor activity during Phase II, Conference 19, she demonstrated her skill development with respect to planning appropriately for children. As she discussed her curriculum plan, she reflected on the needs of Child 14 and the needs of the group.

MTE4: I am responsible for planning a gross motor activity. I haven't seen the children involved in many physical activities but I did notice their love for music. I have a tape [music] of Sharon, Lois and Bram that I think would encourage the children to be physically active. I noticed that (Child 14's name) tripped a lot when we were in the exercise area. I also noticed she had trouble riding the bike outdoors. I think an obstacle course would be helpful for (Child 14's name) and the other children in the group. The tape could be playing in the background to encourage the children to move at different speeds. Slower music at the beginning and then faster music as the children become more familiar with the course. I thought a balance beam would be good to include. (Child 14's name) would have many opportunities to practice her coordination skills. The other children would as well.

The ability to make a curriculum plan which connected to the children's interests and needs in a meaningful way and having the confidence to share this plan and seek feedback were a demonstration of MTE4's professional growth. Earlier in the study, she

did not have the confidence or the skills to connect her curriculum activities to the children's interests and needs. Opportunities for reflective thinking heightened MTE4's understanding of the relationship between child observations and curriculum development. The researcher noted, that as the study progressed, there was a greater emphasis in MTR4's program on planning and implementing curriculum that met the needs and interests of the children.

Reflective Feedback on Guiding Children's Behaviours

During the study, mentors were responsible for providing reflective feedback to the mentees about strategies and skills that would improve their guidance practices, in relation to guiding the children's behaviours. Mentors reflected on their guidance strategies and skills as they posed questions, made suggestions, and provided feedback to the mentees on their guidance practices. During Phase II and Phase III, mentees had many opportunities to practice the guidance strategies and skills they had observed their mentors carrying out with children, throughout Phase I.

Although MTR1 assisted her mentee previously guiding children's behaviours, it was not until later in Phase II that MTE1 tried to implement guidance strategies and skills without her mentor's assistance. MTR1 reflected on one of those incidents during Phase II, Conference 14. She provided reflective feedback related to MTE1's reaction to a child who was hurt earlier in the day. MTR1 compared the strategy MTE1 demonstrated with a similar strategy she used during Phase I, when MTE1 observed.

MTR1: You saw (Child 15's name) hurt (Child 16's name). I noticed you get up from your chair and get down to his eye level. You comforted him and gave him a hug. You encouraged (Child 15's name) to talk to (Child 16's name), and he said "No". Then you said, "Would you like me to come down with you, I will help you with the words?" (Child 15's name) said, "Yes." You took him by the hand and you went down and talked to (Child 16's name). I do that a lot and I say that a lot, "Would you like me to help you?" They don't always want me to do it but I think it is so important to let that other child know how it makes the child who has been hurt feel. He needs to know that it does hurt and as adults we can't allow one child to hurt another child. You demonstrated to (Child 15's name) that there were consequences when you went with him to talk to the other child. I liked how you did that. Have you noticed when I guided children in this manner? I find it very respectful for all children when I can create good relationships between them. You will find as you make decisions about the strategies and skills you will use to guide children's behaviours, that each situation and child is unique. I think the strategy you used in this situation fit the children involved and the situation. What do you think? Were you comfortable using this strategy?

MTE1: I made some notes after that incident because I did have some questions about what I said to (Child 15's name). I wondered would this strategy be effective for other children. What would have happened if (Child 15's name)

didn't want to talk to (Child 16's name)? Would I have tried another strategy?

I'm not sure what I would have done. I guess as I become more familiar with the children, I will be more comfortable guiding their behaviours. I do realize that the program doesn't run as smoothly when there are a lot of inappropriate behaviours happening. That is why I always try to react and get things back under control.

Such positive feedback helped MTE1 realize that the strategies she used were appropriate and effective. It also ensured that she would be more confident and effective in guiding children's behaviour in future situations. Her notes demonstrated her ability to take risks as she reflected on her actions. This ability, according to Bellm et al. (1997), to reflect and take action on this reflection, required significant risk taking. When she did this, she went beyond her usual comfort zone. This demonstrated reflective practice. As a result of reflective practices like this, MTE1 was empowered to demonstrate confidence in her guidance strategies when she guided children's behaviours during the latter part of Phase II and throughout Phase III. These and other examples revealed not only the variety and complexity of problems and situations that MTR1 and MTE1 faced, but some of the ways that they reflected on these complex problems. When MTR1 provided positive feedback to her mentee in this manner, she was instrumental in determining the manner in which MTE1 responded and reacted in future child guidance situations. In addition, the researcher noted that as a result of providing reflective feedback relating to guiding children's behaviours, the mentor's guidance strategies and skills were enhanced.

MTE1 had more experiences guiding children's behaviour during Phase II and Phase III, than in Phase I. This was probably because it took time for her to become comfortable with the children in the full-day program. In addition, she required time to observe her mentor demonstrating appropriate guidance strategies and skills.

Since MTR2 was in the half-day program she did not have as many opportunities to practice guiding behaviour strategies and skills with children who demonstrated challenging behaviours as her counterparts in the full-day program. However, the opportunities that did arise related to children who needed redirection relating to challenging situations.

On one such occasion, MTR2 and her mentee discussed a child who had some difficulties earlier in the day. They discussed the child and reflected on her situation. MTR2 provided additional information about the child and, through this information, she made a connection to the mentee's experiences with the child. During Phase I, Conference 3, MTR2 and MTE2 discussed Child 17, in light of what happened earlier in the day. MTE2 spent much time helping Child 17, however, she was not sure if she had taken the appropriate steps to resolve the child's problem. She needed reassurance that she intervened appropriately in this situation. MTR2 provided this reassurance when she elaborated on the situation by providing positive feedback.

MTR2: (Child 17's name) can be shy and reserved, so when something happens that is negative, she wants to be alone. She knew that she didn't have any extra clothes in her cubby but I also knew that she wouldn't want

to [change her clothing]. Therefore, I suggested that we had spare clothes if she wanted to put them on. We could put her clothes in the dryer. I didn't push the issue. Next I asked her if she wanted me to walk over to her cubby with her and she said, "No". I said, "Okay, I'll just leave you here and when you are ready you can go where you want to go." I knew she would go straight for her cubby and she did. She just slowly walked through the room and then I asked you if you would stay with her rather than having her there by herself, because I knew she would like to participate in circle time as she always does. I knew too that she probably would become upset, so I asked you to sit with her. Would you like to tell me what happened next? I saw you make notes later about this situation. What were you thinking?

MTR2 enabled MTE2 to become reflective about her interactions with Child 17 as she encouraged her to reflect back on the situation. Questions like, "Would you like to tell me what happened next?" or "What were you thinking?" prompted MTE2 to reflect on the situation as a possible learning opportunity for similar situations in the future.

MTE2: At first she [Child 17's name] didn't really want to talk. Then I asked her if she wanted me to read a book and she didn't say anything. Then I asked, "Do you want me to read this one to you", and I was pointing to them [books]. Then she said, "No", but when I got to the one [book] that she liked, she said, "Yes." Then I went over and got the book and she said that she wanted me to read more.

Then I asked her if she wanted to go to circle time but she said, “No.” I noted here [refers to her notes written after this situation] that I wasn’t sure if I should encourage her to go to circle? I thought it was the right thing to do at the time, to keep reading to her. She was quite upset earlier when she got her clothing wet. It is hard for children when something like this happens and they don’t know what is going to happen. I think I was able to help her feel better. I did notice when her mom picked her up, she was smiling and pointing towards me. I think she was telling her mom that I was reading to her.

This discussion and reflection on MTE2’s interaction with Child 17 involved a satisfying but challenging episode. In this particular situation, MTE2 was able to help a child feel safe and secure in her environment under the direction of her mentor. It was feedback episodes of this nature that made MTE2 feel competent, confident, and reassured in her mentee role. In addition, the positive feedback made her feel that she made an important contribution to Child 17’s emotional development. The researcher noted, during the following weeks that MTE2 initiated several interactions with Child 17 in a competent and confident manner. She made eye contact with MTE2 for reassurance, however, she demonstrated effective strategies and skills as she met the needs of Child 17. As well, Child 17 initiated contact with MTE2 on many occasions. It was apparent that Child 17 trusted MTE2 and therefore was comfortable approaching her whenever it was necessary. In addition, MTR2 demonstrated guidance strategies and skills when necessary. During those times, MTR2 called attention to the strategies used and

encouraged MTE2 to observe. MTR2 demonstrated skills in adjusting her guidance strategies to fit the individual child's needs. It was apparent that MTR2 became more skilled in identifying and meeting the behavioural needs of children as a result of conference discussion and reflective feedback.

When MTR3 provided reflective feedback to MTE3 on guiding children's behaviour, she presented it in a caring and informed manner. This was because she was aware that MTE3 was anxious about guiding children's behaviours and that MTE3 did not have the skills necessary to guide these behaviours effectively. MTR3 realized that providing reflective feedback was instrumental to ensuring that MTE3 would eventually gain the necessary skills she required prior to demonstrating guidance skills. Earlier in the study, MTE3 indicated she was intimidated by children with challenging behaviours and lacked the confidence and skills necessary to guide these behaviours. She stated, "I am very nervous when the children are out of control. It really makes me nervous. I see you being so calm and cool when the children are so out of control. How will I ever feel as calm as you do?" MTR3 reassured her mentee that:

In time and with practice, you will be able to redirect and guide children also.

However, there are some children in my group that are more challenging than most children. You may not reach the point where you will be comfortable guiding those children. I find these children very challenging at times. I often consult with others around some of the more persistent and difficult problems.

During Phase I, MTR3 intervened and guided all of the challenging behaviours in

her group. These opportunities provided a model for MTE3 early in the study when she was not familiar with the children and did not feel confident enough to intervene. Later, MTR3 reflected on what happened in these situations and provided a rationale for her actions. For example, during Phase I, Conference 3, MTR3 talked about a situation in the playroom when she intervened to ensure that children did not get hurt.

MTR3: There was a lot going on in the block corner and there was a lot happening in the dramatic corner. It's important at times like this to position yourself where you can see things. That was a cue for me to get involved in the children's play. I don't know if you noticed but I had to go into the block corner and take children away and redirect them to another area. We went to another area to play, because it was too busy down there [block corner and dramatic corner]. I could see that they had a lot of energy to use so I took them to the exercise area. You came with us and that was a good idea because I did need support at that time.

Such discussions provided MTE3 with examples of how to redirect children's energies in a positive manner. In addition, they provided an opportunity to discuss the situations with her mentor. In fact, it was these discussions that MTE3 thought about when she expected to respond to children in similar situations.

A similar behavioural scenario was discussed in Phase II, Conference 9. MTR3 referred to a situation that occurred earlier in the day with Child 18. She thought it was important to discuss the matter in light of the fact that MTE3 talked to her immediately

after the incident and indicated that she was nervous thinking that she might need to intervene. MTR3 reassured her they would discuss it further during conference.

MTR3: (Child 18's name) didn't have the words to use to let me know what she wanted, so she screamed instead. That's something you have to be aware of when you work with young children. They are not always able to think as quickly as an adult. They don't have the experiences to do that. I remind children when they are screaming at each other that the child or adult doesn't understand what they are trying to say if they are not using their words. That's what we need to help them with. You were nervous when this incident started. I could see it in your facial expression. I know you were closer to the child but when I saw your expression, I thought I should intervene and talk later. Tell me what you were thinking when this happened. What do you think now that I intervened? Do you want to comment on what I did?

MTE3: I would never be mean to a child but I think that the child would tell that I was frustrated because I get overwhelmed sometimes by it [screaming]. For example, today when (Child 18's name) screamed, I was really surprised and I got startled when she screamed so loud. Is she like that a lot? How will I know what to do? I was relieved when you intervened. I guess in time I will be comfortable stepping in to situations like that. But you said earlier that there may be children [who] are more

difficult to manage and I may never be confident in guiding at this time in my training. (Child 18's name) is probably one of those children.

However, as the study progressed, MTE3 did begin to respond to children's challenging behaviours and she did "know what to do". At first she facilitated part of the situation and then her mentor intervened and assisted when necessary. This was evident in Phase II, Conference 13. They discussed one of those situations as MTR3 provided feedback on how MTE3 handled a situation when one of the children behaved inappropriately. MTR3 reassured her that she acted appropriately.

MTR3: You attempted it [guiding his behaviour] and the reason why I intervened was because I could see that (Child 19's name) was not listening. You were saying all the right things, "You need to listen to my words. I can wait until you are ready." However, (Child 19's name) can be very challenging and even I am not sure of how to deal with him all of the time. So I thought you could use some assistance. But you were doing a great job and you were confident when you approached (Child 19's name) but I could tell that you would need assistance with this child. What do you think? Did you want to handle this on your own?

MTE3: I was comfortable approaching (Child 19's name) and I thought that he was comfortable enough with me now that he would listen to me. But I was wrong or maybe wrong is not a good word. I misjudged the situation. Thank you for picking up on it. I did talk to (Child 19's name) later when he calmed down. He does seem to have a lot of things happening in his life. He talked about his

dad being away. I think he really misses him. That may explain some of his acting out behaviours.

Such instances were invaluable to MTE3 gaining confidence and being reassured that she did have many skills in guiding children's behaviour. However, it was MTR3's honesty about sometimes needing help with difficult children that was critical to the mentee's acceptance. In this regard, MTR3 shared, "Even I am not sure of how to deal with him all of the time" This was a powerful statement which ensured that MTE3 would continue to intervene in difficult situations and ask for help if necessary. The researcher noted that MTE3 continued to intervene when children demonstrated inappropriate behaviours. However, she often stepped back and allowed MTR3 to intervene and guide Child 18's inappropriate behaviours. MTR3 always followed these interventions with discussions on the specific situation with MTE3. It was apparent that these discussions and feedback enhanced MTR3's guidance strategies and skills when dealing with challenging behaviours. As well, it became apparent that MTE3 benefitted from the discussions and reflective feedback when she intervened and guided other children's behaviours during the study.

The frequency of providing feedback on guiding children's behaviour was low for MTR4 throughout the study. This was due to fewer children in her program and her program was half-day. However, it was important that MTE4 had opportunities to guide children's behaviour during the study. Some occasions did occur and were important. During Phase III, Conference 21, MTR4 provided feedback on an incident that occurred

earlier during the day when MTE4 intervened to stop one of the children who threw sand at another child.

MTR4: (Child 20's name) was throwing sand at (Child 21's name) and (Child 21's name) cried. You were quick to intervene and comfort (Child 21's name) first and then you approached (Child 20's name). You approached him carefully, however, you got down to his eye level and you made eye contact with him. You said, "I can't allow you to throw sand at the other children. it hurts them. (Child 21's name) is very sad now because he has sand in his eyes. Would you like to go somewhere safe and throw things? The exercise area is a safe place to throw balls." When (Child 20's name) said he wanted to stay at the sand box, you were very clear about what he needed to do. You told him, "You can play with the sand but if you throw the sand again you will have to leave the sand box and chose another place to play because I won't let you throw sand at (Child 21's name) again."

MTE4 felt confident about the way she handled the situation. However, she commented on feeling anxious during the episode.

MTE4: I did feel confident with the words I was using, but I haven't really had to intervene a lot with the children. They don't misbehave a lot. I was worried when I said he could go back to play at the sandbox that he would throw sand again. I knew that if he threw sand again, I would have to tell him that he

couldn't play there again. I wonder what he would have done then? But he was fine. Did you notice at one time he was playing with the truck and some of the sand flicked out on the floor and immediately he looked towards me and said, 'It was an accident.' I smiled at him and said, 'That's okay, yes, it was an accident.' I think I did a good job with that situation. The children are accepting me more now also. I know that at the beginning of our placement, when I did try to intervene with a child who was behaving inappropriately, he would run away from me and I didn't know what to do.

This dialogue shows that MTE4 developed confidence in her child guidance skills. The reflective feedback initiated reflection on the present incident, as well, past incidents. MTE4 compared the children's reactions to her now and at the beginning of her placement. This example provided evidence of the impact reflective thinking had on MTE4's confidence. The researcher noted that MTR4 and MTE4 demonstrated more effective strategies and skills as they intervened to guide children's behaviours. MTE4 demonstrated a knowledge of effective guidance strategies and skills when she intervened to guide children's behaviours, following MTR4's reflective feedback. MTR4 became more aware of her responsibilities to provide a model for her mentee that would promote effective guidance strategies. As MTR4 demonstrated this awareness of her responsibilities, it was apparent she became more effective in demonstrating guidance strategies and skills.

Mentor Qualities That Help To Create a Non-Threatening, Reflective Thinking Environment

The development of reflective thinking in mentees was a goal toward which the mentors strived. This was also a goal for themselves. To attain this goal, mentors often demonstrated qualities which helped to create a non-threatening environment which invited reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices.. The qualities displayed most often by mentors were sensitivity and encouragement (see Table 10). When the mentors demonstrated sensitivity towards their mentees, they showed a genuine caring for them. Because the mentees were preservice students, there were occasions during the study, when they lost confidence in themselves and their teaching practices. During these times, the mentors encouraged them to continue to work effectively. A commitment to demonstrating these mentor qualities throughout the study ensured that the mentees were empowered to think reflectively in a non-threatening environment. The following sections will provide evidence to support the mentors' demonstration of these qualities throughout the study.

Table 10. Mentor Qualities

MTR	Sensitivity	Encouragement
1	32	29
2	12	7
3	25	26
4	23	22
Total	92	84

Sensitivity

Sensitivity in the context of this study referred to a quality used by the mentors to demonstrate understanding, concern, and awareness of the needs of the mentees, and to promote reflective thinking. When mentors demonstrated sensitivity to their mentees, they helped to create a non-threatening environment which invited reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices, for themselves and their mentees. All mentors portrayed sensitivity to their mentees throughout each phase of the study. MTR1 was most sensitive to her mentee during conferencing time. On 32 occasions she showed sensitivity as she demonstrated an awareness of her mentee's needs (see Table 10). For example, when MTE1 expressed concern about implementing one of the daily routines, MTR1 responded sensitively. This expression was voiced in Phase II, Conference 6, when MTE1 expressed that she did not feel ready yet to coordinate snack time with the children.

MTR1: I asked you if you would like to coordinate snack routine, but don't at any time feel pressured and you said, "No, maybe later." and I understand that and whenever you are ready, just let me know.

Such sensitivity helped to put MTE1 at ease and created an atmosphere of trust and caring. This was apparent when MTE1 responded:

It means a lot when you don't put pressure on me to do something that I'm not ready to do yet. I know that I will be comfortable coordinating snack soon . . . but not yet. It helps when I can observe you and assist you without feeling pressured to do the whole routine myself.

Later in the study, when MTE1 was ready to implement activities with children, she talked about feeling comfortable when she needed MTR1's help because she had been reassured that it was alright to need help.

MTE1: It made such a difference when you made me feel comfortable early in my placement about asking for help with my activities. That made all the difference when I planned activities that were more challenging when I knew that you would be there to help me and I wouldn't be evaluated lower because I asked for help. You really helped to clarify your role for me. That didn't happen in my other placements. I saw my supervisor as being someone who evaluated me, not a supportive supervisor.

MTE1 believed that this was one of the mentor's roles, to assist and support her when

necessary. Although sensitivity was demonstrated by MTR1 throughout the study, it was particularly emphasized during Phase II when MTE1 began to plan and implement curriculum activities and guide children's behaviours. MTE1 expressed doubts about her skills during this time and MTR1 responded sensitively.

Sensitivity was also shown by MTR2. She was aware of MTE2's anxieties and responded sensitively on 12 of those occasions. Although MTR2 was absent a great deal during Phase II and Phase III, she demonstrated a sensitive awareness of her mentee's needs. During Phase II, Conference 8, MTE2 requested assistance in planning a foot painting activity. At first she was hesitant to ask for MTR2's assistance. MTR2 was cognizant of this. However, MTE2 did ask:

I was thinking that I might need some help when I am implementing my foot painting activity tomorrow. I didn't realize I would need help doing the activity but when I was planning for tomorrow, I realized I couldn't manage alone. I hope you don't mind helping me.

MTR2 put MTE2 at ease by discussing a past experience where she required her team teacher's support to implement a similar activity.

MTR2: No, you definitely need another person helping. I still find that when I'm doing it [here she is referring to a foot painting activity] in the room, I always make sure that [team teacher's name] or the other team teacher is available at least to assist a little. You're trying to help them [children] get in the paint and it's slippery and they're walking down and

it's really not safe just to let them do it on their own.

Again, MTR2 spoke from experience and predicted what support her mentee needed prior to the implementation of similar activities and did so in a sensitive manner. This approach was critical to her mentee if she were to move forward and be comfortable implementing activities. MTE2 was nervous when she talked earlier about requiring assistance when she implemented her activity. However, MTR2 quickly put her at ease by sharing a similar incident when she needed assistance implementing a similar activity and continued to call upon her team teacher when it was necessary. MTE2 responded:

That makes me feel better knowing that you will be there to help me implement my foot painting activity. I want it to be a success and with your help I know it will be. It helps to know that you [referred to MTR2] needed assistance when you did the same activity. I guess we never stop needing assistance at different times. As students, sometimes it feels like we will never be as good as you [refers to MTR2 and the other teachers] are. But when I listen to you reassuring me about what I am doing, then I don't feel so insecure. I am looking forward to my foot painting activity now.

MTR3 recognized that MTE3 was apprehensive and lacked confidence during the study. She responded to these qualities by showing sensitivity when she interacted with her. Evidence of her sensitivity occurred on 25 occasions (see Table 10). MTR3's sensitivity was quite evident from the beginning of the study. For example, during Phase I, Conference 1. MTR3 displayed sensitivity to her mentee by telling her mentee that she

informed the children in her group that a new student would be starting her placement soon and told the children her name. MTR3 recognized the needs of the new student by predicting that it would be difficult for her when she arrived at her placement site not knowing the children's names.

MTR3: I've talked to the children before you came here I told them there was going to be a student [MTE3] coming to be with our group and she was learning to be a teacher. You will be surprised at just how many children will remember your name next week.

Such sensitive instances helped to put MTE3 at ease and removed the concern of not being known by the children. During the same conference when MTE3 expressed concern about not being able to remember all the children's names, MTR3 reassured her again.

MTR3: It won't take long and you will remember. We will put name tags on the children also, but sometimes they take them off. But if you forget just ask them, say, "I'm sorry, I don't remember your name." Or if you are in an uncomfortable situation and not sure of what to do, you can call out to me and you know that I can help you work through it. And I'll do it in such a way the children aren't going to notice. I can be discreet. If I see that you are in a situation that's uncomfortable, I can intervene.

MTE3: That means a lot to know that you are aware of some of the problems I will have. In the past, when we went to field placements and the children didn't

know who we were, they weren't always nice to us. I guess they hadn't been prepared to expect us or know who we were. I feel that it won't be a problem in this placement. You seem to be predicting the problems we may face and are preparing the children for our arrival.

MTR3 predicted some of the problems MTE3 would have and she tried to ensure that her mentee would not hesitate to ask for help. Her tone of voice and language always demonstrated sensitivity. She cared and displayed this caring during her communications with MTE3. As a result of this, MTE3 did not hesitate to ask for her assistance.

Discussions of this nature occurred quite frequently and MTE3 was always relieved when she was reassured and understood. The importance of being sensitive to mentees was expressed by MTE3 during Phase III, Conference 19.

MTE3: I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't understood what I was going through. It is hard when you move to a new place and meet new friends and still have to concentrate on school. Without mentoring, I don't think I could have lasted in the program.

When MTE4 expressed anxiety about the implementation of her activities, MTR4 had an ability to demonstrate understanding and made her feel good about her efforts. Sensitivity of this nature was manifested by MTR4 on 23 occasions during the study and each time it showed MTE4 was visibly relieved. One such occasion occurred during Phase II, Conference 15, when MTE4 expressed disappointment that the children were not interested in her weaving activity.

MTE4: I put so much in to preparing my activity and the children were not interested in it. I invited them to come and join me but they didn't. When you work hard to plan an activity and prepare the materials, it is disappointing when the children don't want to do it.

MTR4 had observed this situation during the day and recognized that MTE4 was anxious about the children not coming to participate. However, one child was interested and made several designs with the weaving materials. MTR4 focused on this when she comforted MTE4 and reassured her by telling her it happened to her in the past.

MTR4: I knew you were disappointed that not many children sat at the table to participate in your activity. But (Child 22's name) enjoyed it, she made several designs. I was glad too, because sometimes it is hard to get (Child 22's name) interested in an activity. Obviously, you had something to offer that was interesting. I know you worked really hard preparing the materials and the space. The materials were bright and attractive but I think if you brought them out tomorrow, the children might love them and make lots of designs. It is disappointing when something like that happens. I know when that has happened to me before, I was disappointed too. Would you like for me to put the activity on our planning sheet for next week and when you come in next Wednesday you can try it again? Sometimes when an activity is brought out a second time, the children react to it differently.

Responses like this were common for MTR4 when her mentee expressed or showed anxiety. She was sensitive to her mentee's emotions during these times as she reassured her that her activities were appropriate. She consistently reminded MTE4 that the children did not always respond to new activities and materials. Sometimes the materials needed to be available for the children to explore at their convenience. This did not reflect negatively on MTE4's choice of curriculum activity. MTE4 was relieved as she responded:

I would appreciate being able to try the activity again next week. Putting it on the planning sheet for next week is a great idea. I will be looking forward to it, and I will think about a new way of introducing it next time. Thank you for pointing out the fact that one of the children did enjoy the activity. I was so upset that other children didn't participate that I forgot that one child got a lot of enjoyment from the materials and the activity.

Encouragement

Encouragement in the context of this study referred to a mentor quality used by the mentors to inspire and promote reflective thinking. When mentors provided encouragement to their mentees, they helped to create a non-threatening environment which invited reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices, for themselves and their mentees.

All mentors encouraged their mentees throughout each phase of the study. MTR1 encouraged her mentee on 29 occasions during conferencing, as she reflected on MTE1's teaching practices in the full-day program (see Table 10). She emphasized the work that MTE1 did was appropriate and exemplary. "I think your work is outstanding. You are demonstrating a good grasp of the content of your courses, especially your curriculum activities and your sensitive interactions with the children." Encouraging comments were voiced during Phase II, Conference 8, when MTR1 emphasized MTE1's observation skills. She noted her ability to apply these skills in an appropriate manner when observing young children at play and involved in group learning activities.

MTR1: You're taking what you are seeing and you're applying it all. You are very observant and it shows in your work. You are eager and interested in developing new skills. You are very strong in a lot of curriculum areas. I noticed today, when (Child 23's name) came in, you observed that he was upset and you quickly thought about what you should do. I noticed you offered to help him get an activity started. You had noted his interest in that same activity yesterday. That is wonderful to see. You are making excellent progress. Imagine, how strong you will be in those areas at the end of your placement. I see such a change since you started.

Later, during the same conference, MTR1 commented on a bulletin board display her mentee designed. This was the first bulletin board display that she created during her

ECE program and she was not sure about the quality. MTR1 offered encouraging comments.

MTR1: The bulletin boards look great. You can see the effort that has gone into it. You certainly took time to prepare the items displayed. They were colorful and creative. I noticed the parents looking at it this morning and I heard many positive comments from them. You included a sample of all the children's work in the group. That is great because the children were also looking at the board and they would notice if there work was missing. I liked the border you made to put around it. It was very appropriate.

MTE1 responded:

I did work hard but it is great when someone notices the effort and the skills involved. This was the first time I had to actually set up a bulletin board display. I was nervous but I won't be next time because your feedback really focused on the specific things I did. That is helpful. In the past, feedback was more general, for instance, it was common for our supervisors to say, "that was good" or "that wasn't so good." But we were never sure what good meant or what parts weren't so good. I know exactly what you mean when you are exact about the work I've done.

Prior to providing encouragement to MTE1, MTR1 reflected on her teaching practices. It was important that she was aware of how to set up an appropriate bulletin board that was

attractive and inviting. MTR1's encouraging comments were based on prior knowledge of effective teaching practices.

Although MTR2 was absent for a great deal of the time during Phase II and Phase III, there were seven occasions during the times she was present that she encouraged MTE2 to initiate responsibility for coordinating daily routines (see Table 10). This encouragement was especially important to MTE2 because she was hesitant during the study to initiate responsibility for the program. During Phase 2, Conference 9, MTR2 encouraged her mentee to take additional responsibilities in the playroom.

MTR2: I think that you are now at that stage where you should feel comfortable in taking on more responsibility when it comes to different program areas in the room. For example, the snack routine should be a routine that you could coordinate now. You assisted me with snack last week and you did an excellent job. I am sure you could coordinate it on your own, knowing that I will be available if you need me. Bathroom routine is another time you could take responsibility for. I know the tooth brushing routine is another routine you have assisted with and seemed quite comfortable and confident. So any time you feel you are ready to do something that you haven't tried before, don't hesitate to let me know. I'm here if you need me. What would you be most comfortable doing first?

MTE2 was quiet and withdrawn at the beginning of the study, however, with encouragement such as this, MTE2 gradually took on additional responsibilities and

became more comfortable with her mentor and the children.

At the next conference, MTR2 acknowledged her mentee's assistance during bathroom routine when she assisted the children with tooth brushing. She also emphasized that she appeared to be more comfortable asking questions when she was not sure of something.

MTR2: You did a great job assisting the children with the toothbrushes and I hope it helps to familiarize you with their names. I have noticed that since you have started your placement with us that you seem to feel much more comfortable with approaching me and asking questions and letting me know if you need a little help. That's great, those are good signs that you are comfortable and you are not feeling intimidated by me. I think more learning can occur that way.

MTE2 responded:

I feel that I am ready to coordinate the tooth brushing routine without your assistance. I was comfortable when I assisted you last week, and the children are responding to me more positively now. Knowing that you are close-by helps also. Knowing that you have confidence in my work is comforting for me. I know I'm not assertive in my work . . . but your feedback helps to boost my confidence. I notice now when I interact with the children, my voice is louder. One of the other teachers commented on that yesterday. At first I wasn't sure if it was a complement or a criticism. However, she quickly reassured me that it was a

complement and we both laughed. So, when should I coordinate the tooth brushing routine? Tomorrow maybe.

Because MTR2 provided encouragement such as this, MTE2 was more comfortable reflecting on her work with the children; as well, she became more confident and skilled in demonstrating teaching practices related to coordinating daily routines. Moreover, the researcher noted that MTE2 initiated and demonstrated effective teaching practices in relation to coordinating daily routines, as a result of discussions and reflections on specific teaching practices. For example, it was noted that routines such as tooth brushing and snack were coordinated in a meaningful and effective manner

MTE3 required encouragement throughout the study and MTR3 responded on 26 occasions (see Table 10). One of those occasions occurred during Phase II, Conference 19, when MTR3 felt it was necessary to encourage MTE3 to stay focused on her work. MTR3 was aware that MTE3 was experiencing personal problems. She noticed during the day that she was working diligently at implementing her curriculum activity. Although a sensitive approach was important, it was the encouragement that MTR3 provided that was important at this time. MTE3 demonstrated earlier in the study that she had difficulties staying focused during her placement. Therefore, it was important when MTR3 noted MTE3's interactions with children at this time. When encouragement was provided consistently by MTR3 throughout the study, MTE3 was empowered to exhibit enthusiasm and commitment to her work.

MTR3: I see the whipped soap activity went really well again this

morning, they [children] love it. I was watching children coming and going and as one child would get tired of it they would leave and then more children would come, the table was always full of children for that full hour. I was really pleased to see your enthusiasm again this morning when you came in. You got involved immediately and you started your activity and there was lots of involvement and lots of interactions with the children. Your language was appropriate. I noticed that some of the terms you were using earlier, at the beginning of the placement were replaced with more appropriate terms. Good for you, you are certainly aware of what is appropriate. Sometimes this takes time, but obviously you are trying and it is working.

MTE3: I am trying hard to concentrate on my work. It means a lot when you notice that my work is improving. That helps to keep me motivated. I do enjoy working with the children and I feel a lot better about my work since I have begun to put in more effort. I know I will continue to keep up the good work, and I will do well in my placement. I am determined. You are right. I am aware of what is appropriate, and I feel that I am on the right track. Finally!

Encouragement was an important quality for all mentors to demonstrate during mentoring, however, it was particularly important for MTR3 to demonstrate encouragement to her mentee because MTE3 had difficulties demonstrating effective teaching practices at the beginning. However, over the course of the study she made

progress in all areas of her field placement. MTR3's encouragement was critical to this progress.

MTE4 often expressed doubts in her abilities, particularly after she implemented curriculum activities. It was during those times that MTR4 emphasized her strengths as a mentee and provided motivation to help build on those strengths during the study. MTR4 encouraged her mentee on 14 occasions to reflect on the positive aspects of her activities. Evidence of this encouragement was revealed during Phase II, Conference 13, when MTE4 talked about a new book she brought to read to the children during small group time. However, some of the children were not interested in the book and they left the book area before MTE4 finished. She expressed doubt in her choice of book and the presentation of the book. MTR4 commented on the reading activity as she made encouraging comments.

MTR4: I thought the choice of book was appropriate. They enjoyed The Rainbow Fish I thought that your presentation of the book went really well. I wouldn't be too quick to criticize your reading abilities or the choice of book. I think if you read it tomorrow to a different group of children, they would enjoy it and would stay to hear all of the story. Maybe tomorrow before you read it we could introduce it with a finger play about a fish. Could you think about a finger play that would be appropriate for the children and you could introduce it before the story tomorrow? I think you did an excellent job today reading the book. Your

voice was clear and you changed your tone of voice to portray the different moods of the fish. Children like that. I also liked it when you let the children touch the sparkles on the fish. You used lots of expressive language, “the fins are dazzling, shimmering, shiny, and sparkling”. Children love those words.

MTE4: Thank you for reassuring me that it wasn't something I did or didn't do that caused the children to become disinterested in the book. I do know a finger play about a fish . . . that we did last year in (Instructor's name) class. I will look for it when I go home. I never thought to do something like that to get the children interested. I will definitely try that. I know I lose my confidence easily . . . but I will get better as I get further in to my placement. I appreciate your comments and feedback.

It was encouraging comments like these that helped MTE4 to become confident and knowledgeable in implementing curriculum activities. The researcher noted on the following day, MTE4 introduced the book *The Rainbow Fish* with a finger play about fish and the children showed enthusiasm and excitement. They listened attentively to the story and requested that MTE4 read it again. Occasions such as this helped reassure MTE4 that she was capable and knowledgeable about early childhood teaching practices.

Summary

Mentors and mentees performed complex teaching practices during their daily work with children. Providing formal opportunities such as conferencing, enhanced their ability to reflect on these practices in a meaningful manner. It was apparent that giving reflective feedback on meaningful and effective teaching practices was an effective mentoring strategy that was utilized in this study to promote and encourage the mentees' reflective thinking with respect to early childhood teaching practices. However, in the process of providing reflective feedback to the mentees to inform them about their teaching practices, mentors also reflected on their teaching practices. Therefore, teaching practices were enhanced for mentors and mentees.

As mentors and mentees reflected on their teaching practices, they organized their thinking around specific issues that occurred during the day. These issues related to curriculum and guidance. With respect to curriculum, reflection focused on planning and implementing curriculum activities. Mentors were aware of the mentees' anxieties concerning planning and implementing curriculum activities and found that giving reflective feedback related to curriculum activities was an effective means to address the mentees' anxiety and enhance their teaching practices. Reflective feedback related to guidance focused on the needs of individual children and the behavioural interventions that were used to guide inappropriate behaviours. Mentors recognized the mentees' need to reflect on the needs of children in order to plan and implement appropriate behavioural interventions.

Mentors often demonstrated qualities which helped to create a non-threatening environment which invited reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices. When mentors responded to mentees in a sensitive manner they initiated the conditions necessary for reflective thinking. Throughout the study, mentees had many occasions when they were unsure of their teaching practices or lacked confidence in demonstrating teaching practices. During those times mentors always responded in a sensitive manner. Sensitive responses by the mentors helped to promote reflective thinking in the mentees, as well the mentors. In addition, it was natural to expect that the mentees would not always be successful in planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours. Therefore, it was important that the mentors provided encouragement during those times. When mentors modeled a sensitive approach to the mentees and encouraged them to continue to try harder at their work, a non-threatening environment was created and maintained. This environment was conducive to a reflective thinking environment.

Journal Writing Inspires Reflective Thinking

The primary purpose of journal writing was to promote reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices. The analysis of journal writings revealed that they were effective in promoting and encouraging reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices. Mentors and mentees indicated an appreciation for their work with children as they implemented meaningful teaching practices. In addition,

mentors recognized the importance of providing a teaching/learning model for the mentees as they demonstrated effective teaching practices.

The importance of mentor feedback during conferences was confirmed by the mentees as they reflected on the appreciation they had for the honest and sincere manner in which feedback was provided. As these qualities were demonstrated during conferences, mentees emphasized the importance of these and other qualities being exhibited at all times throughout the study.

The researcher provided journal questions (see Appendix E) to help the mentors and mentees focus their reflective writing on specific topics related to teaching practices. The mentees scheduled a twenty minute period at the end of each teaching day to reflect on their day and write their reflections in their journals. The mentors, however, reflected on their day and wrote in their journals after their teaching day. MTR2 was absent for part of the study and did not participate in journal writing. The following sections discuss the contents of the journals regarding: significant daily happenings, mentee teaching assistance, mentor self-reflections on teaching practices, importance of conferencing, mentor qualities, and mentor/mentee mentoring relationships.

Significant Daily Happenings

Mentors and mentees felt the most significant part of their day was planning and implementing curriculum activities with the children and the satisfaction the children got from participating in these activities. In addition, the mentors identified assisting the

mentees to implement teaching practices as being meaningful and rewarding. Mentors felt that through mentoring they were introduced to a whole new way of relating to the preservice students. All of the mentors wrote about the excitement of observing their mentees become more skilled at interacting with children and implementing their activities. These observations of the mentees' growth in these areas were cited frequently in their journal writings. They also wrote about the feeling of self-accomplishment in their teaching role when their mentees spoke often about the positive role models they provided as they demonstrated effective teaching practices for their observations.

MTR1 and MTR3 wrote a great deal about their teaching practices in relation to guiding children's behaviours. They commented on the specific situations with the children and how exciting and challenging these practices were for them. They reflected on situations that were positive and negative, as they expressed joy about the positive situations and sadness about situations that did not turn out so well for a child or group of children. They were both unwilling to give up on any child and often expressed frustration when the situation did not work out to their satisfaction. MTR3 was particularly excited when a child who had problems being accepted by his peers was accepted into group play. During Phase I, she wrote:

(Child 24's name) and (Child 25's name) were building in the block corner and (Child 26's name) was trying to enter their play. (Child 24's name) and (Child 25's name) said they weren't (Child 26's name) friend and asked him to leave. I

approached the situation and asked (Child 24's name) what they were making. I continued to talk to the children enthusiastically about what they were making and included (Child 26's name) in my conversation. At the end of the conversation with the children, (Child 26's name) was invited to play. (Child 26's name) was elated and so was I. I feel sad for children who get rejected by their peers. From my experience with young children, it is an area of concern that is ongoing.

Reflective journal writing such as this, provided an opportunity for MTR3 to reflect on her interactions with the children and emphasized the importance of helping children who have difficulties making friends.

In a journal writing during Phase I, MTR1 reflected on a situation that had occurred in the playroom. This situation resulted in frustration and enjoyment. She was frustrated because a child continued to demonstrate behaviour problems even after her intervention. However, it was enjoyable because she was worried that Child 27 did not have friends and she felt that her interventions would help him eventually. She wrote:

During my efforts to guide (Child 27's name) behaviours, he continued to throw legos over the floor and coach (Child 28's name) to throw chairs. I had to remove him from the room and talk seriously to him. At first he didn't listen but eventually he did. I worry about him. Are we doing the right things for him? Maybe we should consult with someone else. He doesn't have any friends and that worries me.

Reflective journal writing in this instance, encouraged MTR1 to reflect on Child 27's

behaviours and think about a long term plan to meet his needs that may include an outside referral. The researcher noted that there was an outside consultation on Child 27 that resulted in an individualized program plan. MTR1 was instrumental in initiating this referral and individualized plan. From MTR1 and MTR3's journal entries, it appeared they had similar experiences. However, MTR3 resolved the problem and felt positive about the situation, but MTR1 continued to have questions relating to what else could be done for this child. Situations like these provided the context for reflective thinking during journal writing, that often resulted in individualized programming for children. Such was the case in this situation.

Mentees wrote in their journals about the teaching practices they enjoyed most. They were: planning and implementing a variety of activities with children in the various learning centers, planning and assisting the mentors on field trips with the children, and observing the enjoyment that children expressed as they used the materials and equipment. They noted that curriculum involvement provided the time to interact and observe the children, as well as, observe their mentors more closely as they worked with smaller groups of children.

The enjoyment of observing young children and participating in their learning activities was evidence in all mentees' journals. During Phase II, MTE3 wrote:

I enjoyed reading to the children. They always enjoy the books I bring in to the center. We had a wonderful time in the housekeeping corner. It was busy and fun. I liked making the playdough with (MTR3's name). It was more enjoyable

doing an activity together and I got a chance to observe the children more closely when there are two teachers instead of one. The fact that MTR3 asked me to join in the activity made me feel like her partner and it was relaxing because I knew that if a problem arose she would be there to help me and even more to guide me. That made a big difference. She helped me learn new ways to improve an activity.

It was apparent from this journal entry that MTE3 learned many strategies and skills related to a variety of teaching practices as she worked beside her mentor. She had an opportunity to reflect on the importance of reading to children, teaching collaboratively with her mentor, and the importance of her mentor providing a model of meaningful teaching practices. MTE1 supported this view as she reflected on one of her days during Phase III. She wrote:

I really enjoyed being outside today with the children. I especially liked being down by the balance beam with the children. They wanted to go on a snail hunt. (Child 28's name) and (Child 29's name) initiated the hunt and before I knew anything, all the children joined us. We went all over the yard looking for snails and even made up a song about snails. Later we wrote a story about our hunt. The children were so interested in snails that I said I would look for a book about snails for next week.

MTE1's reflections on her teaching practices emphasized the importance of connecting curriculum activities to the children's interests. The researcher noted that MTE1 brought

several books to the center the following week that promoted the children's interest in snails and other garden insects. As a result of MTE1's reflective thinking in this instance, she brought additional meaningful resources to the children's program.

During Phase II, MTE2 elaborated on her day, as she thought about small group time and particularly noted the importance of following up on the children's interests.

My favourite part of the day was small group time. This gave me a chance to spend some low key quality time with the children. They enjoyed the materials so much that later I brought out the same materials for the children to use again. I think this helped the children to be more creative and provided more time for them to use materials without being pressured to put them away. Later myself and (Child 30's name) were sitting in the block corner singing and listening to music. I noticed that she enjoys music a lot. I will bring in some new tapes next week, that she might enjoy.

It was apparent from these reflective writings that MTE2 was aware of the need for children to have plenty of time to explore materials. As well, she demonstrated an awareness of the importance of planning activities that met the needs of individual children.

Mentee Teaching Assistance

Mentors felt that they assisted their mentees in many ways throughout the study, but they especially wrote about the sense of satisfaction they got from modeling

appropriate teaching practices. The practices they wrote about most often were the opportunities they had to plan and implement curriculum activities with the children and guide their behaviours. They wrote about occasions when they observed their mentees using teaching strategies and skills similar to their's during their work with children.

Evidence of such reflections on mentee assistance were written about across all phases. For example, during Phase I, MTR1 observed her mentee observing her and making notes as she coordinated snack routine with the children. Her journal entry read:

MTE1 was observing me at morning snack today. I knew she was observing my methods of language with the children and coordination skills. I feel she is almost ready to coordinate lunch routine. therefore, observation is good for her to do. I have let her know that when she is ready to do the lunch routine she can let me know. Although MTE1 was observing me, she helped the children also. When one of the children wanted her to sit at the table with her, she did, but kept observing.

MTR1 was aware of her mentee's skills. However, writing about it helped to emphasize the importance of modeling appropriate teaching practices. During the weeks following this journal entry, the researcher noted that MTR1 was aware of modeling meaningful and effective teaching practices for her mentee when they worked together planning and implementing curriculum activities . In addition, prior to planning and coordinating daily routines, MTR1 emphasized the skills and strategies that she expected MTE1 to observe and took steps to ensure that these specific skills were modeled.

During Phase I and Phase II, MTR4 often wrote about her awareness of the importance of being a role model for her mentee as she worked with the children. On one such occasion, during Phase I, she wrote:

I was doing a small group time activity and MTE4 was observing me. One of the children didn't want to participate in the activity. I was nervous and wasn't sure if I should ask MTE4 to help me. If she were my team teacher I would have asked but I didn't want to interrupt her observations. I didn't have to ask. She intervened and offered the child an alternative activity. She went to the water play table with him but she continued to observe me. She couldn't take notes at this time but later she talked to me about what happened and I reassured her that she had done the right thing. She was actually using a strategy that I had used several weeks before when [team teacher's name] was having problems with a child during circle time. MTE4 had observed this situation. I guess she was using the same strategy. I hadn't thought about that earlier. But she was modeling a strategy that I had used several weeks earlier. I realized the importance of providing an effective teaching model for MTE4 at all times. It may not be a planned observation but they [mentees] were aware of what was happening in the playroom at all times.

Such situations provided appropriate reflective opportunities for MTR4. They indicated MTR4's awareness of MTE4's strengths when she assisted the planning and implementation of a small group time activity as a result of reflective writing. In

addition, MTR4 realized the importance of modeling meaningful and effective teaching practices for MTE4 at all times.

During Phase III, MTR3 summarized her feelings about the impact of her mentee observing and modeling her behaviour. She wrote:

I watch MTE3 and I see myself sometimes. She is modeling me. This makes me feel good. I observe her demonstrate her true abilities and I know that the consistency and encouragement I provided was worth it. The mentoring experience helped her have a successful field placement experience.

This reflective writing showed MTR3's awareness of MTE3's needs and her excitement about helping meet these needs. Such writing supports what the researcher noted during her observations of MTR3 and MTE3 during the study. She noted that MTR3 remained consistent in her feedback to MTE3 during conferencing as she encouraged MTE3 to improve her skills and be successful in her field placement. In addition, this consistency and encouragement was demonstrated as they worked together planning and implementing daily routines, planning and implementing curriculum activities, and guiding children's behaviours.

Across all phases of the study, there were many opportunities for mentors to model appropriate behavioural intervention strategies and skills for the mentees. Mentors became aware of the mentees' anxiety about guiding the children's behaviour when they discussed the inappropriate behaviours of individual children during conference time. Mentors reflected on these opportunities in their journal writings as they wrote about the

learning that took place when the mentees observed their strategies and skills as they guided children's inappropriate behaviours.

During Phase I, MTR3 wrote about a unique learning opportunity MTE3 had experienced as she and another mentor guided a child's inappropriate behaviour. She wrote:

MTE3 talked about her observations during conference today. She picked up on the importance of following through with redirecting inappropriate behaviour as she observed me redirecting (Child 31's name) and getting him involved in more productive play. MTE3 also noted the importance of being able to call upon a dependable team teacher when you need someone assisting you. She noted when I called upon MTR1 to help with redirecting (Child 32's name), so I could continue to be with (Child 31's name). This was an important observation for MTE3 to make. I think it made her aware of the fact that mentors need help and assistance also. Mentees have a tendency to think that we have all the answers and that we are capable of dealing with all situations without help. Such was not the case in this situation.

An openness to new ideas and wanting to learn more were important qualities for mentees to demonstrate. As MTR3 reflected on this situation, she realized the importance of her mentee having opportunities to observe her in complex situations. Situations where MTR3 required assistance to guide a child's behaviour was a unique situation to model for MTE3. MTR3 viewed this occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate that mentors do

not necessarily have all the skills necessary to intervene with children all of the time. The mentors' learning is continuous in guidance situations, as well, planning and implementing curriculum activities. They often depended on their team teacher for support. Reflective writing, in this case, affirmed the teaching/learning process is continuous for the expert teacher (mentor) and the novice teacher (mentee).

Mentor Self-Reflections on Teaching Practices

Across all phases of the study, mentors reflected on their teaching practices as a result of mentoring. They wrote about how they were more conscious of their interactions with children as they implemented curriculum activities. They now viewed themselves as providing a model of excellent teaching practices for their mentees. This awareness also extended to their planning for children and the importance of planning based on children's needs and interests. During Phase II, MTR3 wrote:

Being a mentor made me aware of my teaching role. Today when making playdough with the children, (Child 33's name) wanted to explore the materials with her hands. This gave me the opportunity to model for MTE3 how one activity can initiate another activity or experience. After the playdough activity, I set up another activity for (Child 33's name), where she could explore these materials and feel the textures. Next week I would like to focus on MTE3's interactions with larger groups of children. She would now like to make playdough. This would be a great opportunity for her. Maybe this experience

would help her overcome her overwhelming fear of working with larger groups of children.

MTR3 became aware of her mentee's needs and had opportunities to reflect on those needs through her writing. She was aware of MTE3's fear of working with larger groups of children. Therefore, reflective writing was an effective means to help the mentor think about meaningful and effective teaching strategies she would implement when she and her mentee planned and implemented curriculum activities.

As a result of mentoring, during Phase II, MTR4 thought about whether or not she guided her mentee in a way that allowed her to develop her own teaching style. She wondered if she encouraged dependence on her teaching strategies and skills. She wrote:

Am I guiding MTE4 through the study and giving too much of my ideas or views? And if I am, will she let me know? [Later in the study, during Phase III, she wrote], I notice now that MTE4 is taking more initiative and doing things a little differently than before. I think she is more comfortable now initiating her own curriculum activities. I see her jotting notes in the room if I am redirecting a child or making notes on an individual child. I see a confidence that was not there before as she demonstrates effective teaching practices. I guess that means that she trusts her own teaching ideas but continues to learn from me as she observes me interacting with the children and implementing curriculum activities.

MTR4 and her mentee worked well together and developed a trusting relationship during the study. Reflective writing helped MTR4 question her teaching strategies and skills

with respect to guiding and encouraging MTE4 to demonstrate effective teaching practices.

Importance of Conferencing

Mentees wrote more about the importance of the feedback provided by their mentors during conference time than any other component of conferences. They felt that positive feedback allowed them to reflect on their teaching practices, as well, pointed out the importance of knowing when a teaching practice was ineffective and needed improvement. They generally perceived their mentors to be honest and sensitive when providing reflective feedback. For example, during Phase III, MTE4 wrote:

I appreciate the honesty when MTR4 gives feedback during conferences. She never makes me feel bad about what I have done, even if it isn't totally right. Instead, she guides me to think about alternative ways of doing something next time. I feel like I am part of the half day teaching team and not just a student.

Reflective writing such as this demonstrated the importance of providing feedback in a sensitive manner. It was apparent from MTE4's reflections that MTR4 was skilled at providing feedback in relation to teaching practices, as well, encouraging MTE4 to reflect on those teaching practices for the purpose of making changes.

During Phase I, MTE1 noted the suggestions MTR1 provided during conferences were meaningful. She wrote:

The most informative part of my conference today was when MTR1 explained

how and why I could encourage two-way communication between the children. I can't wait to try these ideas out in the playroom on my next placement day. I really appreciate the suggestions that she [MTR1] shares with me.

It was apparent that MTR1 was skilled at making suggestions in relation to teaching practices that focused on enhancing language skills for children, as well, presenting suggestions in a manner which fostered the mentee's reflective thinking about specific teaching practices.

Planning activities that linked to the children's needs and interests presented a challenge to many of the mentees throughout the study. MTE3 felt that her mentor was not only aware of this challenge but took appropriate steps to ensure she was coached to plan appropriately for children. During Phase II, MTE3 wrote:

I saw a planning session take place today. I am looking forward to joining MTR3 in her planning meeting on Friday. I am beginning to feel more confident in my own planning since MTR3 has given feedback on my activities. Sometimes they [curriculum activities] don't always connect to the children's interests. MTR3 talked to me about this during conferences and then I thought about the importance of connecting activities to the children's needs and interests before the next planning meeting.

Providing opportunities for MTE3 to reflect on planning appropriately for young children to meet their needs and interests ensured that she improved her teaching practices in these curriculum areas. Reflective thinking about planning appropriate

activities for children and connecting these activities to the children's interests not only enhanced the quality of the mentees' field placement experience. as well, improved the quality of the curriculum activities presented to the children.

MTE1 supported the view that feedback provided during conferencing was most important. She also elaborated on the importance of being able to observe her mentor, as well, providing feedback during field placements.

I appreciate MTR1, and all the feedback she has given me. I feel that observing her as well, having her review my work, has really helped me grow as an ECE. The constant guidance she has provided through mentoring has given me teaching skills and abilities that I can carry with me (and build on) throughout my teaching career.

Mentor Qualities That Supported Teaching Practices

Throughout the study, mentees wrote about several mentor qualities they thought were helpful in supporting their early childhood teaching practices. The qualities that were mentioned most frequently were: sensitivity, knowledgeable, friendly, and honesty. This thinking was reflected in their journal writings, some of which are recorded below:

MTE1: I realize the way MTR1 responds to the children is much the same as the way she responds to me. In all situations she remains calm, sensitive, and caring. I definitely consider MTR1 to be a positive role model. If I can be as sensitive a teacher as she is, I will be happy. That quality [sensitivity] makes her easy to

approach with questions, problems, and comments. . . .

MTE3: (Child 18's name) joined myself and a group of children at the gluing table one day. We were looking at a magazine and (Child 18's name) grabbed it from (Child 35's name). He took me by surprise and I was a little unsure of how to handle it. But MTR1 was observing what was happening and she intervened when she sensed that I needed her assistance. I really appreciated not only the fact that she helped me but also that she was sensitive to my feelings of uncertainty.

MTE2: MTR2 has become a partner to me. Myself and (MTR2's name) seemed to have more communication and conversation (about the children, activities, etc.) in the room than (MTE4's name) and I did. I find (MTR2's name) to be very helpful and knowledgeable when planning and implementing curriculum activities. She always makes suggestions that I find to be useful and meaningful when I plan and implement activities..

MTE3: I like that MTR3 is friendly, sincere, easy to talk to, and very open minded. It helps to know that she is there to help not to judge. I like the way she guide's children's behaviour, she doesn't get overwhelmed or frustrated with a situation. She is a very positive person with staff, parents, and children and

always seems to be happy and in a good mood. I hope I can have these qualities when I become an early childhood educator.

MTE4: I am finding MTR4 to be very honest and genuine. She has a genuine personality that really makes a person feel comfortable and relaxed. If there were any issues bothering me I went to her for support and guidance. I trusted her and I don't think I would have went to her for support if that trust wasn't there. She was always willing to listen and easy to talk to about any situation. She encouraged me to make decisions, but first she provided information. Today she gave me a choice about whether my activity was done as a small group activity or with the larger group. I liked being given a choice.

When mentors demonstrated these qualities, the mentees were encouraged to promote effective teaching practices. In addition, it was apparent that the mentees trusted the mentors and were confident enough in their teaching skills to take risks when they were required to demonstrating specific teaching practices. Writing about the mentor qualities that were helpful in promoting meaningful teaching practices was a reflective opportunity for mentees to think about how these qualities were helpful in this context, as well, in future teaching experiences.

Mentor/Mentee Mentoring Relationships

As the study progressed, mentors wrote about the team colleague relationships they established with their mentees as being very significant to the mentoring relationship. They perceived this as being instrumental to the success of the mentoring relationship, in relation to their teaching practices. During Phase II, MTR4 wrote about how MTE4 was more of a team colleague rather than a student intern.

MTR4: I'm getting much closer to (MTE4's name) and we are becoming more like two team members than student and teacher. She [MTE4] is getting so good at picking up on the children's interests and connecting them to her planning. I like her ideas in planning. We [Half day teaching team] depend on her to bring notes on child observations and we use them to plan activities for children. It is nice when we both feel that we have something to share. I feel that I am learning so much from (MTE4's name).

MTR1 agreed with the importance of the mentor/mentee mentoring relationship and how her mentee was more of a team teacher than a student. During Phase II, she wrote:

I forget that MTE1 is a student sometimes. Even during conferences she brings so much to the meetings and I depend on that. Our conversations are so full of interesting things about the children and their activities. I find that I depend on her feedback about my activities. I am learning so much from her. We are

learning together I guess. I think we will always stay friends even after the mentoring is finished.

MTR3 supported the importance of the collegial relationship. During Phase III, she wrote:

I feel very rewarded by my whole experience as a mentor. It has taught me quite a bit about being a positive role model, supporter, and friend to the students that go through this program. They need all the positive mentoring they can get to become successful in their own roles. It is good for us also to be involved in mentoring. I learned a lot from my mentee. I will miss her.

In addition, MTR3 viewed the mentoring relationship as being critical to her mentee's success during field placement. She emphasized how important the relationship was to her mentee. She wrote:

During conferencing, MTE3 emphasized that without the feedback, negative or positive, she would not have seen her areas of weakness. I think about how important this mentoring project must have been for her.

Such reflective writings helped to stretch the limits of the mentors' capabilities for reflecting on their relationship with their mentees. According to MTR1, reflections like these enabled the mentors to view their future role with students during field placement a little differently. She wrote:

I think this study will change what we do for students in the future. How can we go back to the way it was before the study? We can't help but be influenced by

what has happened here. Students will definitely benefit in the future.

Mentees also identified many aspects of the mentor relationship as being important. However, they particularly wrote about the importance of their mentor being a model teacher who provided guidance and assistance when necessary. During Phase II, MTE3 wrote:

I don't know what I would do, if it weren't for MTR3. She was always there when I needed her. Today, one of the children was acting up and I had to intervene. MTR3 came close to the situation in case I needed her assistance. It was a good thing too because the child was out of control and I did need help. Just watching her talk to the child was helpful. I hope I can be a teacher like MTR3 when I graduate. She teaches what we are learning in the classroom. I have never seen that before in my other placements.

Reflective writing enhanced MTE3's understanding of the importance of MTR3 modeling teaching practices that linked to specific academic courses.

MTE4 was pleased that she had someone to go to for support and assistance who was more than a supervisor. She wrote:

I don't look at MTR4 as a supervisor. I looked at her as an equal. She treated me with respect and I felt valued in the playroom, where my opinions counted. But still, I knew that she was there to assist me when I needed her. That was important to me especially when I lost confidence. That happened sometimes.

It was apparent that MTE4 appreciated being treated with respect by MTR4. However,

she realized her limitations with respect to her teaching practices and recognized that she needed support and guidance when planning and implementing curriculum activities, and guiding children's behaviours.

MTE1 viewed her mentor as a person who supported her professionally. She thought that when this quality was present, she was more confident implementing her activities. She wrote about the importance of being able to observe her mentor practice effective teaching strategies and skills prior to being expected to demonstrate skills. For example, during Phase II, MTE1 wrote:

I noticed today that MTR1 let me handle some situations on my own and I really liked that. I was glad that I had seen her handle a similar situation last week. Sometimes, even though I may feel a little unsure, when I see my mentor has confidence in me, it makes me feel more confident and competent.

It was apparent that opportunities like these were meaningful for MTE1. She recognized the importance of her mentor providing a model of appropriate teaching practices, prior to taking responsibility for planning and implementing teaching practices. Opportunities, such as these, increased MTE1's confidence, as well, her competence in becoming an effective early childhood educator. Reflective thinking opportunities fostered MTE1's early childhood teaching practices.

Summary

Journal writing opportunities promoted reflective thinking in the mentors and mentees in relation to early childhood teaching practices. When mentors and mentees responded to the journal questions, they reflected on the following topics: significant daily happenings, mentee teaching assistance, mentor self-reflections on teaching practices, importance of conferencing, mentor qualities, and mentor/mentee mentoring relationships in relation to early childhood teaching practices.

When mentors and mentees reflected on significant daily happenings, they emphasized the importance of their work with young children. Meaningful teaching practices were promoted as being important to meeting the needs and interests of the children. Mentors thought that modeling appropriate teaching practices was the most effective assistance they provided to their mentees during the study. When mentees had opportunities to observe their mentors demonstrate meaningful teaching practices, they were empowered to become more effective early childhood educators.

Mentors' self-reflections on daily teaching practices emphasized the importance of their mentoring role. Through their reflections they became aware of their mentoring responsibilities, in relation to providing an individualized model of teaching practices that met the needs of individual mentees. In addition, they realized the process of teaching and learning was continuous for themselves, as experienced educators and the mentees, as novice teachers.

Mentees wrote about the importance of reflective feedback provided during conferencing as being most helpful in the enrichment of their teaching practices, as well, mentor qualities such as: sensitivity, knowledgeable, friendliness, and honesty.

Mentors and mentees thought the collegial and professional relationships established during the study promoted meaningful and effective teaching practices. Mentors and mentees wrote about the importance of having a collaborative teaching model where they both had opportunities to contribute to the children's program in a meaningful way. Mentees recognized their limitations and appreciated the mentors awareness of their teaching strengths.

Chapter 5

Summary, Findings, and Recommendations

Currently, provincial colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador, where an Early Childhood Education Program is available, train students for two years to obtain a diploma in Early Childhood Education. The practical component of the training program does not have a process in place to support or train early childhood educators in any formal way to develop mentoring strategies and skills that would promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices during the students' field placements. The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a reflective mentoring program for experienced early childhood educators and preservice students that would provide opportunities for reflective practices and promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices.

This qualitative case study examined the teaching practices of four mentors and four mentees in one college setting over a twelve week period. Prior to the study and throughout the study, the researcher provided resource materials and facilitated training seminars on mentoring and reflective thinking for the participants, to accommodate for their lack of formal training in mentoring and reflective thinking. During the study, the researcher collected data from four sources. They were: interviews, observations, conferences, and journal writings. The participants were interviewed before and after the study to determine the knowledge of mentoring gained in relation to the role of the mentor, the benefits of mentoring for mentors and mentees, and effective mentoring

strategies and skills that promote reflective practices. The participants were observed daily as they worked together to determine effective mentoring strategies and skills used to demonstrate effective early childhood teaching practices. In addition, participants were observed and audio-taped as they met daily for conferences to examine the effectiveness of conferencing as a strategy to promote reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices, as well, to identify mentor qualities which create a non-threatening environment where mentors and mentees could become reflective thinkers. Participants wrote journals about their daily teaching experiences and the writings were examined as an effective strategy to promote reflective thinking in relation to early childhood teaching practices.

The following findings provide direction for the development and implementation of a reflective mentoring program for early childhood educators.

Findings:

N Components of An Early Childhood Education Mentoring Program

1. A reflective mentoring program for early childhood educators includes the **five** components: **Mentoring Seminars, Early Childhood Teaching Practices, Early Childhood Reflective Thinking Practices, Non-Threatening Reflective Thinking Environment, and Qualities of An Effective Mentor.**

8 Mentoring Seminars

1. Mentoring seminars, prior to and during the implementation of a mentoring program, are necessary for mentors and mentees.
2. Mentoring seminars need to be planned for three audiences: seminars for mentors, seminars for mentees, and seminars for mentors and mentees.
3. Mentoring seminars, prior to the implementation of a mentoring program, include the following topics: mentor roles, mentor and mentee benefits, and mentoring strategies and skills.
4. Mentoring seminars, during the implementation of a mentoring program, include topics that meet the needs and interests of the mentors and mentees, such as mentoring and reflective thinking and planning curriculum activities reflecting young children's needs and interests.
5. Mentoring seminars during the implementation of the mentoring program, occur weekly during the first phase (1st - 4th week) of the mentees' field placement and bi-weekly during the second and third phases (5th - 12th week) of the mentees' field placement.
6. Mentoring seminars during the implementation of the mentoring program, be scheduled for a minimum of 2 hours.

N Early Childhood Teaching Practices

1. Two effective mentoring strategies used by mentors to demonstrate and assist mentees as they plan and implement early childhood teaching practices are modeling and coaching.
2. Modeling is an effective mentoring strategy when used by mentors to demonstrate specific teaching or guidance strategies for their mentees to observe.
3. Modeling provides the mentees the opportunity to observe new and /or appropriate teaching practices before they can be expected to demonstrate them.
4. Modeling is useful when mentees require additional observations of a particular teaching strategy or skill.
5. Modeling includes demonstrations of three specific early childhood teaching practices: planning and co-ordinating daily routines, planning and implementing curriculum activities, and guiding children's behaviours.
6. Modeling the planning and coordinating of daily routines is the first early childhood teaching practice to demonstrate.
7. Modeling is most meaningful when preceded or followed by mentor/mentee discussion of a specific teaching strategy or skill to be demonstrated.
8. The majority of mentors' modeling occurs during the first phase (1st - 4th week) of the mentees' field placement.
9. Coaching is an effective mentoring strategy when used by mentors to assist and instruct mentees to demonstrate meaningful teaching practices.

10. Coaching provides opportunities for mentees to teach collaboratively with their mentors in a teaching/learning environment, becoming confident and competent at demonstrating teaching practices.
11. Coaching is most effective when it occurs after the mentees have many opportunities to observe their mentors model a variety of teaching practices.
12. Coaching includes assistance and instruction in two specific early childhood teaching practices: planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours.
13. Coaching is most meaningful when preceded or followed by mentor/mentee discussion of a specific teaching strategy or skill to be demonstrated.
14. The majority of mentors' coaching occurs during the second phase (5th - 8th week) of the mentees' field placement.
15. Mentors' modeling a specific teaching practice occurs before the mentors coach this teaching practice.
16. When mentees have many opportunities to observe mentors model and coach meaningful teaching practices, they become more confident and competent carrying out these teaching practices.

N Early Childhood Reflective Thinking Practices

1. Two effective mentoring strategies to promote and encourage mentors' and mentees' reflective thinking regarding early childhood teaching practices are

- conferences and journal writing.
2. Conferences are scheduled daily for a minimum of 30 minutes to promote and encourage mentors' and mentees' reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices.
 3. Conferencing provides a formal opportunity for mentors to provide reflective feedback to mentees related to early childhood teaching practices.
 4. Conferencing is most meaningful when mentors provide reflective feedback related to mentees teaching practices and mentees have the opportunity to discuss the feedback.
 5. During conferences, mentees gain new teaching perspectives as they communicate and reflect with their experienced early childhood educator (mentor).
 6. During conferences, mentees reflect on the discussion, questions, suggestions and feedback provided by their mentors.
 7. During conferences, mentors reflect on their knowledge and understanding of early childhood teaching practices as a basis for discussion, questions, suggestions and feedback.
 8. Conferences include time for discussion of planned and unplanned topics and issues related to professional and personal needs and interests.
 9. Conferences are most effective when mentors first observe mentees involved with early childhood teaching practices and guidance strategies, and write jot notes related to the observations.

10. Mentors' observation jot notes are the basis of their reflective feedback for their mentees.
11. During conferences, when mentees receive positive feedback from their mentors, they become more confident and competent in their planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours.
12. Daily journal writing promotes mentors' and mentees' reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices.
13. Journal writing includes reflections related to specific early childhood teaching practices and reflections related to personal needs and interests.
14. Journal writing related to specific early childhood teaching practices reflects thoughts and feelings about planning and coordinating daily routines, planning and implementing curriculum activities and guiding children's behaviours.

⌘ Non-Threatening Reflective Thinking Environment

1. Two mentor qualities that help create a non-threatening reflective thinking environment for mentors and mentees are sensitivity and encouragement.
2. When mentors are sensitive to mentees' professional and personal needs, the mentees are more open to discuss and reflect on these needs.
3. When mentors provide encouragement to their mentees, they inspire and promote reflective thinking in mentees and themselves.
4. Two organizational elements that promote mentor and mentee reflective thinking

are uninterrupted time and quiet space for conferencing.

N Qualities of An Effective Mentor

1. An effective mentor is knowledgeable about a college's Early Childhood Education Program: courses and content.
2. An effective mentor is knowledgeable about young children's development and how they learn.
3. An effective mentor is knowledgeable about her professional and personal responsibilities to her mentee.
4. An effective mentor is aware of the professional, emotional, and social benefits of mentoring to her mentee and herself.
5. An effective mentor has strong communication skills: active and reflective listening and reflective speaking.
6. An effective mentor is a friendly, honest, caring, sensitive, and encouraging mentor.

Recommendations:

1. The Provincial Colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador that provide Early Childhood Education Programs develop and support a formal mentoring program for experienced community child care early childhood educators who are interested in becoming or who are preservice field placement supervisors

- (mentors). Such a formal mentoring program would ensure that a partnership is established between the community child care centers and the colleges.
2. The early childhood educators who are selected to mentor students in the Provincial Colleges' Early Childhood Education Programs have formal training in mentoring.
 3. The formal training in mentoring include discussions and reflections on the following topics:
 - The Role of the Mentor
 - The Development of Mentor Strategies and Skills - Conferencing, Journal Writing, Modeling, Coaching, and Communication Skills
 - The Connection of The Theoretical and Practical Components of Early Childhood Education Programs
 - The Development of Reflective Thinking Practices. This includes training in Reflective Practices, Conferencing and Journal Writing
 4. The Provincial Colleges' Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee and the Early Childhood Education Faculties collaborate to develop selection criteria and a selection process for choosing quality mentors for their field placement program.
 5. The Provincial Colleges' Early Childhood Education Programs include a core course on mentoring and reflective practices for early childhood education students.

6. The Early Childhood Education courses on mentoring and reflective practices include a focus on modeling and coaching strategies to demonstrate effective early childhood teaching practices and a focus on conferencing and journal writing as effective strategies to promote reflective thinking related to early childhood teaching practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A

- Consent Form

Consent Form

I grant permission to Carmella Singleton - researcher in the case study on Mentoring in Early Childhood Education, to audiotape my interviews, and conference sessions, and use other identified methods of data collection for purposes of this study. Whole or part of the contents of these tapes may be used in the final thesis submission. I understand that as I work with children, observations will be conducted by the researcher and field notes will be written on these observations. They will be used as part of the data collection. I further grant permission for the researcher to use the contents of any journal writings I do as part of this study as another method of data collection for purposes of the study. I understand that names will not be used in the published document, codes will be assigned to each Mentor/Mentee pair. I understand also that participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

- Mentor Interview Questions
- Mentee Interview Questions

Mentor Interview Questions

Question 1

Before

What do you see as being the role of a mentor? Discuss.

After

Now that you have been a mentor, what was your role? Discuss.

Question 2

Before

Do you think that mentoring will benefit you? How?

After

Now that you have been a mentor, what are the benefits? Discuss

Question 3

Before

What mentoring strategies would you use to optimize reflective thinking? Discuss.

After

What mentoring strategies did you use to optimize reflective thinking? Discuss.

Question 4

Before

Although you have not had prior experience in a mentoring program, do you think daily conferences and journal writing should be included in a mentoring program? Explain.

After

Now that you have had experience in a mentoring program, which included conferences and journal writing, do you think they were important to include in this program? Explain.

Question 5

Before

If conferences were included in preservice field placements, how much conference time should be scheduled? Why?

After

Now that you have had the opportunity to conference during the study, how much time do you think is necessary to conference effectively? Why?

Mentee Interview Questions

Question 1

Before and After

What is the role of a mentor? Discuss.

Question 2

Before

Do you think that mentoring will benefit you? How?

After

Now that you have been mentored, what are the benefits? Discuss

Question 3

Before

What mentoring strategies should be used to optimize reflective thinking? Discuss.

After

What mentoring strategies were used to optimize reflective thinking? Discuss.

Question 4

Before

Although you have not had prior experience in a mentoring program, do you think daily conferences and journal writing should be included in a mentoring program? Explain.

After

Now that you have had experience in a mentoring program, which included conferences and journal writing, do you think they were important to include in this program?

Explain.

Question 5

Before

If conferences were included in preservice field placements, how much conference time should be scheduled? Why?

After

Now that you have had the opportunity to conference during the study, how much time do you think is necessary to conference effectively? Why?

Appendix C

- Data Collection Form

Data Collection Form

Mentor/Mentee Names: _____ Date: _____

Observation (with children present): _____ Time: Start: _____ Finish _____

Conference: _____

Observer comments	Field Notes	Coding

Observation # _____

Conference # _____

Page # _____

Appendix D

- Mentor Journal Guide
- Mentee Journal Guide

Mentor Journal Guide

The following questions are a guide to your reflections as you journal write:

Question 1: Write about a significant happening in your day, with respect to your teaching practices.

Question 2: As a mentor, did you provide teaching assistance to your mentee today? Discuss.

Question 3: Reflect on one of your daily teaching practices. Discuss.

Question 4: Comment or reflect on your mentor/mentee mentoring relationship, with reference to your teaching practices.

Mentee Journal Guide

The following questions are a guide to your reflections as you journal write:

- Question 1. Write about a significant happening in your day, with respect to your teaching practices.
- Question 2. Reflect on the importance of conferencing. Discuss with reference to your teaching practices.
- Question 3. What mentor qualities do you find most helpful in relation to your teaching practices. Why?
- Question 4. Comment or reflect on your mentor/mentee mentoring relationship with reference to your teaching practices..

Appendix E

- Seminar #1: Agenda
- Seminar #2: Agenda
- Seminar #3: Agenda
- Suggestions for Mentoring

Agenda: Mentoring Seminar #1

Date: September 6, 1995

Duration: 2 Hours

Participants: Mentors and Mentees

Chairperson: Researcher

AGENDA

- I. Overview of Case Study at the Demonstration Center
 - Purpose of the study and the roles of participants.
- II. Scheduling of Site Visits for the Researcher
 - Mentor and Mentee Conferences
 - Mentor and Mentee Observations
 - Journal Writing
- III. Small Group Discussion
 - Article: "Mentoring in Early Childhood Programs" (Lindamood, 1993)
 - Article: "Synthesis of Research on Teachers' Reflective Thinking" (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991)
 - Definition of Mentoring and Reflective thinking
 - Formal versus Informal Mentoring
 - Purposes of Mentoring
 - Elements of Reflection
- IV. Summary

Agenda: Mentoring Seminar #2

Date: September 27, 1995

Duration: 1 Hour

Participants: Mentees

Chairperson: Researcher

AGENDA

- I. Planning Meetings:
 - Purpose
 - Planning Daily Activities
- II. Video "The Daily Team Planning" (Highscope, 1994):
 - (A 20 minute video illustrating a curriculum planning meeting being conducted in an early childhood education setting).
 - View
 - Discussion
 - Planning Components:
 - Children's Anecdotal Records
 - Children's Interests
 - Children's Developmental Levels

Agenda: Mentoring Seminar #3

Date: October 4, 1995

Duration: 2 hours

Participants: Mentors

Chairperson: Researcher

AGENDA

- I. Discussion of Mentor Handbook: California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program:
 - Topics related to mentoring role
 - Ways to facilitate mentoring roles
- II. Discuss Research Study Issues
- III. Social

Suggestions for Mentoring

As a follow up to our seminar on Wednesday, October 4th, 1995 re: California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program: Mentor's Handbook and other related discussion, I would like to highlight the following areas that I would like for you to think about and implement during the remainder of the study. I realize that some of you may be already implementing some of these ideas however please read through them as you reference the Mentor's Handbook. We are now at a stage where we can try some new ideas as suggested in the literature. These ideas support what has been happening in the observations and conferences throughout the study.

Please note the following suggestions :

Observation can be used to highlight your mentee's skill of "learning to see".

1. Based on the needs of the children in the different groups, ask your mentee in the morning to observe throughout the day and identify and describe what activities were implemented today to meet the social needs of the group? the physical needs of the group? the intellectual needs of the group? What did your mentor or the members of your teaching team do to ensure all children's needs were met in this particular area? I would only give a mentee one developmental area per day; social, emotional, physical or intellectual to focus on. You would not want to overwhelm your mentee by assigning too many observations.

Mentor Modeling: You can use modeling informally and formally.

2. Informal Modeling: Provide running commentaries to your mentee throughout the day as you proceed with an activity, observe a group of children for a specific reason, or observe an individual child for a reason. Example: I am getting the materials prepared for this activity before the children come in because I will not be able to leave the room when all the children are here or I am watching to see if William can control himself before I intervene. He has been successful controlling his behaviour over the past week and I want to encourage this. This type of commentary will provide your mentee with valuable insight into your rationale for "doing what you do".

Formal Modeling

3. Choose an area from your mentee's evaluation form that you haven't yet had an opportunity to model or observe. Highlight this area to your mentee and arrange to demonstrate this aspect of the program. For example: For the next two days observe how I greet the children and parents in the morning. Watch for eye contact and dialogue. Note what I say and how I react to situations. Note if a child is having difficulty separating from the parent. What do I say to the child and to the parent. Ensure that during these times your mentee is not responsible for other duties. It is important that you model many appropriate examples of these behaviours before your mentee can take responsibility for coordinating and implementing teaching practices. Regardless of the activity you expect your

mentee to observe or demonstrate, be specific re: the behaviours you want her to notice when she is observing you or if you are to observe her. Using this method, your mentee will be more focused. Have your mentee take jot notes on how this is done; a running record would be appropriate for something like this. Later you will want to bring this information to conference time for discussion and feedback.

Demonstrate this skill

4. The follow-up to this is to have your mentee **demonstrate this skill** while you observe for the same things. Again you will take jot notes and give feedback at the conference or immediately, if there is time.

Give immediate feedback whenever possible.

5. You will need to use your own discretion about this; much will depend on how busy the room is and on other factors. Trust your own judgement. I realize that each mentee has her own strengths and needs, therefore each pair may be working on different areas. Remember there are many opportunities to model appropriate ECE qualities, e.g., with children, in the staff room, during conferencing, on the telephone, interacting with parents and/or other professionals.

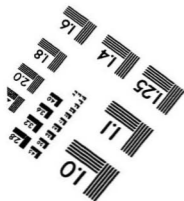
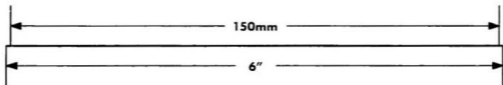
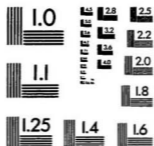
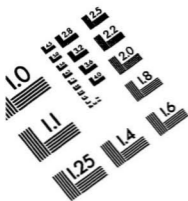
Planning and Reflective Thinking

6. Include your mentees in the planning process; encourage them to bring their jot notes to the planning sessions re: individual children or groups of children.

7. Promote reflective thinking related to curriculum activities. Provide the

necessary support if the mentees are to implement an activity or set up a particular area. Ask questions that will promote reflective thinking: What is the purpose of the activity? How do you think the children will respond to the activity? What teaching strategies will you use? Questions like these help mentees to develop their thinking about children and the curriculum.

RESOLUTION EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/298-5989

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