

Components of the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program

The Early Childhood Apprenticeship is founded on the concepts of mentoring, reflection and dialogue, diagnosis and intervention and demonstration of learning. These components are built into the structure of the experience and are the responsibility of all parties involved in the process.

Mentoring:

The Apprenticeship program is designed to fully utilize the expertise of the master teacher. A mentoring/coaching model is used throughout the quarter to work toward that goal. Master teachers model teaching for the Apprentice, co-plan and co-teach lessons with them, and provide on-going feedback as an active participant in this final stage of professional preparation. The master teacher is continually involved in working with the Apprentice as coach, guide and facilitator of learning, throughout the entire semester.

Reflection and Dialogue:

Reflection on teaching and learning enables the Apprentice to begin to understand the “why” behind teacher decision-making in the classroom and to focus on the learner and learning, rather than content coverage and teacher-centered instruction. Dialogue is one of the primary tools used in this reflective process. Observation tools, evaluation/feedback forms, and communication strategies built into the program are used as a means to foster dialogue and subsequent understanding. The master teacher and Apprentice engage in dialogue related to teaching and learning on a daily basis. Master teachers engage in dialogue about teaching and learning with each other and the university coordinator at regular sessions. Apprentices also meet with the coordinator for that purpose, and seminars are designed to bring all parties involved together to reflect upon critical issues related to learning and schooling. Dialogue journals kept by Apprentices are yet another source of this ongoing reflective communication (see appendices P, Q, R).

Diagnosis and Intervention:

Both mentoring and reflection on teaching and learning enable the development of the diagnostic/developmental approach of this model. Master teachers work with all Apprentices on setting goals and developing areas in need of improvement. Plans are made and implemented to work toward these goals. The university coordinator works with the master teacher on implementing goal-setting strategies. The coordinator is called in for an intervention if an Apprentice experiences significant and ongoing difficulties in one or more areas. Interventions can be initiated by the university coordinator, master teacher, building coordinator, or building administrator. Multiple evaluations are made of the Apprentice's teaching by other master teachers, the coordinator, peers, and administrators at this time, to work toward the criteria necessary for successful completion of the Apprenticeship program. The failure to make needed changes as identified on the intervention summary may lead to the Apprentice repeating the Apprenticeship semester in order to be guaranteed as a graduate of Augusta State University's Teacher Preparation Program. Counseling related to other options for those who are not successful may occur. Throughout the process, all parties work together to

meet the needs of the Apprentice and ultimately the needs of the elementary school students he/she is teaching (see appendices G, H)

Demonstration of Learning and Knowledge Gained:

Apprentices demonstrate progress toward and accomplishment of goals set regularly throughout the semester. They work closely with the master teacher to reach these goals and set new ones. The development of an Apprenticeship portfolio, elements of which become part of their comprehensive portfolio, occurs throughout the semester to evidence learning, skills and abilities. This portfolio is shared with the master teacher and the university coordinator at an exit conference. This coupled with the ongoing evaluation and reflection upon teaching and learning, and the ongoing active involvement of the master teacher, allows students to demonstrate their learning and continue to focus on growth as professionals (see appendix A).