

## Communication and Collaboration

Effective communication is fundamental to leadership in early childhood education. The relationships that are built within the Early Years sector are integral to providing equitable, high-quality care and support to families and children (CECE, 2015). For students, field practicum offers the ability to build relationships with colleagues, Agency Mentors, and Faculty Advisors while working in collaboration with them to strengthen their leadership competencies and grow professionally.

The purpose of this resource is to support you in reflecting upon and strengthening your approaches to communication and collaboration.

Effective communication entails:

- **Applying interpersonal skills:** Building professional relationships with students, Agency Mentors, and Faculty Advisors through communication grounded in empathy, respect, and understanding.
- **Active listening skills:** Prioritize listening to agency mentors and faculty advisors; seek to understand the feedback they provide and demonstrate an openness to learning and growing.
- **Strong written communication skills:** Ensure that your written work and emails are clearly expressed and professional.
- **Awareness of the body language of yourself and others:** Pay attention to the nonverbal cues that body language communicates in yourself and others to enhance communication and understanding.

(CECE & OCT, 2021)

### Communication and Collaboration with Agency Mentors and Colleagues in the Field

Your field practicum offers you the opportunity to work alongside experienced RECEs who will guide you along your experiences working directly in the field. Your Agency Mentor is a key figure during your practicum and the relationship you build with them is critical to your learning. Open and respectful communication will help to develop a foundation of trust and help to facilitate the development of a positive and collaborative relationship.

Engaging in reflective conversations with your agency mentor is fundamental to your professional growth, seize opportunities to share your thoughts and goals and invite them to work with you to accomplish them together. Accept the feedback that your agency mentor offers and display a commitment to growth, the insights that they provide are opportunities to reflect and improve on your practice. As you gain confidence in your role, start to be more proactive in initiating collaboration when planning programming and take the lead on tasks when it is appropriate (Andrusak, 2019).

### Building Trust and Respect in Professional Relationships

Effective communication with colleagues is key to creating a successful and supportive learning environment. As a future educational leader, your role will involve building respectful relationships amongst staff and families. The ability to model and foster a culture of support, encouragement, and collaboration amongst colleagues is fundamental to fulfilling the responsibility of supporting the well-being of children and families. Your field practicum will offer you the chance to practice these leadership competencies (CECE, 2021).

## **Communication and Collaboration with Faculty Advisors**

Faculty advisors play an important role by bridging the gap for students between theory and practice, offering an academic perspective to assist in the planning of curriculum and guidance in implementing reflective practices. Accepting the support and guidance and developing a positive, communicative relationship with your faculty advisor is essential to a successful field practicum (Andrusak, 2019).

Outside of scheduled meeting times, your communication with your advisor will be mainly done through email, make sure to display professionalism and respect through these interactions. Be open to the feedback that your advisor provides, they may challenge you to think critically on your experiences and expand your horizons, they want to see you strengthen your capacities and grow during your practicum (CECE & OCT, 2021).

## **Communication and Collaboration with Students**

As agency mentors and faculty advisors, you play a pivotal role in guiding students through their field experience and fostering their professional development. Establishing a supportive relationship through positive, respectful, and ongoing communication is essential to students' growth and success.

Effective communication is a skill that is learned, through demonstrating professionalism and active listening to students, you are modeling this skill to the students you work with. When offering feedback, remember to reaffirm what students are doing well along with what needs improvement. Encouragement along with proper guidance is important in ensuring students' gain confidence. As students gain confidence, provide opportunities for them to take initiative on projects, this will allow them to practice their leadership competencies and problem-solving skills (Andrusak, 2019).

## References

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