

Mentor's Energizer

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Connection through Values

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Announcement:

National Conference on Universal Human Values

The conference was unique in its approach and thorough in its results. For a more detailed look at the Conference report; please logon to: www.bahaiacademy.org

Shortly, the presentations will be published in a souvenir publication and will be available online.

Favorite Resources:

Here's a free booklet with 40 great games for helping students work together and get to know each other:

<http://www.training-games.com/pdf/40FreeIceBreakers.pdf>

The Bahá'í Academy wishes to thank our mentor of the month, Dr. Mita Parveen Gharte, for sharing her insights.

Using the model at right, please send your comments and pictures to:
energizer@bahaiacademy.org

Administrators, teachers, mentors students and interested observers

met together for the First National Conference on Universal Human Values at the Academy on 5-6 April. They gathered to share the research they have been doing on putting universal human values into practice in the classroom, the family and the community. The theme of universal human values connects us all as we work not only to improve circumstances in society, but to create new social forms from which we can dip into the extraordinary reservoir of human potential that already exists. The conference attendees did not dwell on or try to justify humanity's failings. Instead, whether teachers, mentors, students or administrators, they collectively explored ways of developing capacity for societal change. Everyone's contribution is valuable. The administrators have the vision which recognizes the need for strengthening values in every area of learning. The mentors and teachers, selflessly promote truth and virtue as the bedrock of any successful future career and cultivate environments conducive to learning in meaningful ways. The students, bent on using both knowledge and wisdom to change the world, reach out to their families and communities with brave gestures of compassion and understanding. In their case, teaching becomes the highest form of learning. All contributors felt great affinity for each other and at once celebrated the victories while challenging each other to greater heights. What a privilege to witness the future in action right now.

Meet The Mentors



Meet Dr. Mita Parveen Gharte, Associate Professor, Department of Medicine Programme Coordinator, Motiwala Homeopathic College, Nashik

How has the experience of taking the mentorship training affected you?

It has been a pleasure to work as a mentor as well as coordinator for this course for the last 7 years. Personally I have benefitted as a mentor in several ways. It has sensitized me towards all the wrong things going on in our society. Yet, without creating a sense of helplessness it has empowered me to stand against them in a decoupled way. Experience of conducting various service learning activities has boosted my belief that, yes, change is possible; what we need for it is pure motives, unity of purpose and disciplined action. Working with adolescents on a dais where everyone participates and puts forth their views has taught me that there are many perspectives to look at a matter; I have learned to accept their outlook, too, and this has taken me a step towards maturity.

What are some of your positive experiences about being a mentor?

Becoming a mentor has narrowed the gap between me and my students. Participatory learning gives students a chance to share their experiences with their peer group and mentors; this acts as a vent to their feelings. Many times we've experienced that there is so much confusion regarding values in participants' minds and the course gives them a platform to speak without hesitation. As a mentor this gives us a chance to understand our students and at times help them to resolve their confusions. As a teacher this is such a fulfilling experience. Teaching a concept by playing games is such a novel and interesting way of teaching and also such type of teaching creates a deeper impression on learners' minds without creating any stress. I have tried to inculcate these cooperative learning methods in classroom teaching also.

What kinds of transformations have you seen in your students?

Basically being a teacher I always had a keen interest towards student's behavior. I noticed that some of the students who sit silently in the classroom become active during these sessions. They may be lacking in scholastic intelligences, but they exhibit so many other talents which come forth during these sessions. Eventually it gives us a chance to motivate them to develop these talents. One of our participants does not score so well in exams, but during Happy Hippo Show he performed very well. Now he is part of all the programs where his acting skills can be utilized. During discussions I have also noticed that students who previously discussed only about gadgets and movies now talk on concepts like true happiness and the purpose of life.

Do you have any advice for other mentors?

Dear friends, while mentoring we will have to unlearn first the conventional way of teaching, because subconsciously we keep on going to lecturing which is a unidirectional flow. We will have to make ourselves conscious that we, too, are recipients. We all possess skills to talk; now we have to develop skills to listen as well. Again, let us not forget that action speaks louder than words and hence our being and doing should go hand in hand.

At the end I thank my institute and the Bahá'í Academy for introducing me to this wonderful course.

Energizing our Classrooms

Any teacher knows that too much information leads to information overload and lower retention. A brief, energizing activity in the middle of a tough lesson can not only wake students up and keep them interested, but can solidify the concepts being presented. The mentor training gave a number of activities to get students moving such as the "If You're Happy and you Know It" song and the Cooperative Juggling. Below you'll find a few others to enhance classroom morale while sharing messages which are value based.

Sing and Sign

Put hand signs with songs to get students involved. On the website you'll find a new song to share with your students called "The Unity Song". We've added it lately to our trainings. The movements come from Sign Language. Check out the song lyrics and video online.

Mix and Match

In a big, open room, have the students begin to walk around. While walking, you call out a characteristic. For example, the first characteristic is the same length hair: everyone with short hair will be in one group, shoulder-length in one group and long hair in another group. There can be more groups if people match. Call out the next item. Vary the list to fit the participants: same home town, same type of shoes, same birth month, same color shirt, same height, same favorite food, etc. Do this five or six times until everyone has found something in common with everyone else. Point out that we can always find things in common with people all over the world because everyone eats, they just eat different things, was born, just born in different places, wears clothes, just likes different colors, etc.

Stick to Unity

One thin stick is easy to break, but a bundle is impossible. One strand of yarn is easy to break, but not a braid. Make unity bracelets by braiding three different skin tones of yarn together. Exchange them. There is strength in unity and power in giving.

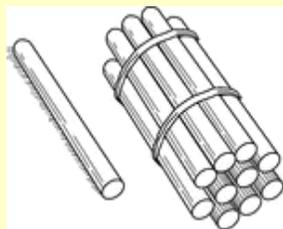
Memorize in Unity

Help each other memorize a quote such as: "So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." Stand in a circle and have pairs of students, or singles, depending on the number of students, create a motion for each word in the quote. Go around and do the motion as you add one word at a time. Memorize the quote in this way and see who can say it at the end. Allow the others to prompt him/her with the motions.

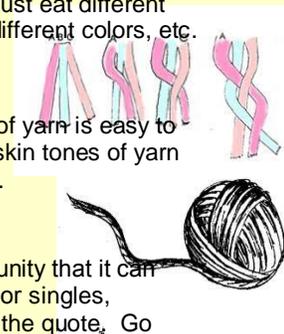


Love

Glad



Back issues of the Mentor Energizer are available on the website. If you've missed an issue, please feel free to download it at www.bahaiacademy.org



How can we support each other?

Teaching is a privilege and we love it, but sometimes we run out of ideas, have a problem with a subject or a student or simply need a friend to talk to who understands the stress involved. In talking to mentors, the following suggestions have been presented.

Buddies: In our role as mentors, we're often seen as the "wise ones", but who do we go to when we need advice? Another mentor who understands is our best peer. Mentors shared that the most valuable quality in this person is being a good listener. Listen to each other without trying to solve the problem at first. Only offer advice if requested.

Share resources: Do you have an effective energizer? Do you know a great method for teaching a particular concept? Have you found an online source for teaching aids? We all have a lot to do and sharing resources saves time and energy. If you send your resource ideas to energizer@bahaiacademy.org, we'll post them for others to use as well. We lose nothing by sharing, and gain credibility when we boost others.

Public eye: Be supportive of each other in front of the students. Pop into each other's classroom (with prior arrangement!), share a friendly story that shows another teacher's good qualities. When students see how much the teachers respect each other, respect grows amongst themselves as well. Catch each other being good. Take time to commend each other specifically on jobs well done.

Be available: Sometimes a student needs more help than his/her teacher can provide because of lack of time, personality conflict, etc. Providing a quiet space for a student who needs it or offering some extra tutoring can help your colleague tremendously and will surely be reciprocated.