

Mentor's Energizer

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Creating a New Mind

Paul Lample, in his book "Creating a New Mind" says, "Human reality is bounded by the limits set in the mind. Change in mind becomes change in deed and change in the world." He goes on to say that specific virtues or moral capabilities help us to surmount the obstacles contemporary society places in the path of change. These virtues include humility, the desire to acquire knowledge, the responsibility to champion justice, selfless giving and purity of motive. Each plays an important role in overall social transformation.

Humility, for example, is largely ignored in today's society. The "desire to advance oneself over others as a motivating force in one's life is a defect of human character that, unfortunately, is being promoted by certain social theories as a praiseworthy trait. Aggression and unbridled competition are considered inherent in the human condition," explains Lample, but this doesn't have to be. In fact, as mentors, we see the remedy to this erroneous view in our Service Learning Activities where the urge to indulge the self through dominance over others is subdued by the desire to serve the well being of all. Our students are not operating in an educational vacuum. They work together with communities creating organic solutions to local problems. Through unified thought and action, devotion and service, they provide fellowship and support for others while manifesting excellence and distinction as individuals. Theirs is a conscious effort to address social and material problems and facilitate collective transformation, which, in due course, will yield the fruits of a new civilization.

What a gift to be involved in this process! And, it is such a humbling experience. We have to be ever mindful of the "new minds" we're creating. We must unbind our own limits if we expect to facilitate the process in others. We must not only develop our own virtues and moral capabilities to shine as examples, but also our own humility to explain to our students that we are also stumbling along on the path, trying to find our footing. If only transformation were instantaneous. Wow! We're magically transformed into humble, knowledgeable champions of justice who give selflessly with pure motive. But, alas, we develop the capabilities only by taking the journey, making the mistakes and turning the stumbling blocks into stepping stones. We learn from each other. Please consider sharing your mistakes as well as your victories with your fellow mentors.

Meet The Mentors

Meet Mrs. Masarrat Ali, Associate Professor, Secondary Training College, Mumbai



What creative ideas have you tried in the classroom?

Making students to be in Open Learning mode and learn willingly and easily is not an easy task. I adopted many creative techniques in my classroom which changed the attitude of students towards learning. They are as follows:

- I asked the students to select any one topic of a compulsory paper and share its main points during the morning assembly on the basis of one student per day. I was so thrilled to see its result. Each student presented one topic in which he/ she had gained a little mastery after reading it several times to prepare his/her presentation. It helped the listeners to learn each day a new topic from their own classmates.

- Another idea I implemented was that of using Mobile learning. In this connection I told my class to send a very short text on WhatsApp or through SMS to all their classmates. The text could be a definition or main points of any topic. Most of the students and their mentors formed a group on WhatsApp. People usually do not read such messages but here it created some enthusiasm and the students' responses and feedbacks motivated them to send such messages and read them which ultimately helped in their learning.

What has surprised you about your students during the service learning activities?

During such activities students come up with fantastic ideas. They cooperate and help each other. I get surprised to see those who are very shy and do not come forward on their own, come forward enthusiastically and come up with creative ideas.

What challenges have you faced while mentoring your study groups and what did you learn from them?

While mentoring my study group I face the same challenges as the other mentors face. But I feel if we proceed systematically and with well-planned time management, many such problems will not arise; always keeping in touch with the students works wonders.

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Picture gallery:

"We can be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."
Thornton Wilder,
playwright.



The Bahá'í Academy wishes to thank our mentor of the month, Mrs. Masarat Ali, for sharing her insights.

Please send your photos for inclusion in the Energizer:
energizer@bahaiacademy.org



Bringing Beauty into the Classroom



As mentors, we're always trying to stimulate, encourage and empower our students. We want to get them thinking, talking, growing, learning and believing in themselves so that they'll go out and make the world a better place. We want them to build their strength through the nurturing their universal human values so that they can better serve their families and communities. Beauty is a natural way to stimulate creativity and quicken their innate desire for improvement. Below are some simple ways to bring beauty to our classrooms.

Music inspires

Baroque music—such as Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" and Pachelbel's "Canon"—has been shown to synchronize brain waves at about 60 cycles per second, a frequency associated with increased alpha waves. In turn, alpha is a frequency of mind associated with enhanced creativity. Ask your students to bring in inspirational music, such as pieces by Pandit Ravi Shankar, and play it during activities where they are coming up with ideas. Remember, music with words is sometimes distracting. Instrumental music can be internalized without interfering with communication.



An Eye for Color

Celebrate visual beauty by having everyone wear a certain color on a particular day. Lay colored cloth or paper on desks or tables so that the eyes have something different to look at. Place a bouquet of colorful flowers in the front of the classroom. Use colored chalk or markers instead of black. Find pictures of beautiful scenery and make a slide show to play with music as the students are coming into the classroom.



Smells, tastes and textures

Agarbatti Incense Sticks, herbs like mint or lemongrass stimulate creativity and evoke a sense of calm. Consider having a food-sharing day with students bringing different snacks or colorful fruits. Send the students out on a walk to bring in samples of textures from nature such as leaves or stones. Sometimes just touching a different texture fires different neurons in your brain and enhances brainpower.

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

How do we cultivate an attitude of gratitude?

Face it, sometimes life gets us down. We feel overwhelmed and forget that everything is not bad all the time. If we take a moment to focus on the people and things we are grateful for, our troubles will fall by the wayside. It's difficult to feel both negative and positive emotions at the same time. For example, it's hard to be jealous of a coworker for getting an award while simultaneously being thankful for his contribution to your life. Being grateful, brings us into the present moment so that we don't dwell on "what could have been" or the "what might be, if only" Research shows that grateful people have higher reported levels of positive states of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness and energy. How do we focus on and appreciate the abundance in our lives to improve emotional wellbeing and general happiness? Here are a few ideas from well-known experts in the field such as Deepak Chopra, Swamiji and Farnaz Masumian.

Gratitude Journal—Each evening, list the things you're grateful for. Start with five things and build up to a full page of gratitude. Review these lists in the morning to remind yourself what a wonderful life you have. Then, start your day.

Read a Quote—Choose a short, inspirational quote for the day. Write it down and carry it with you. Look at it often or memorize it. Use it as an affirmation. Studies have shown that positive words, repeated often, are healing.

Listening—Ask others what they're grateful for. You'll get more ideas and insights into the power of gratitude and you'll be giving someone the gift of being listened to—a rarity in today's fast-paced world. You'll be having a meaningful conversation, which is something to be grateful for in itself.

Meditate—While quietly sitting in a comfortable position, turn your thoughts to the things you're grateful for and repeat them aloud, then whisper them, then say them in your mind. For example: I'm grateful for my health. I'm grateful for my loving family. I'm grateful for the air I breathe. I'm grateful for the food I eat. I'm grateful for the challenges I'm able to face and overcome. This repetition internalizes your positive feelings and helps you face obstacles with joy and grace.

Next month: How does cultivating Universal Human Values simplify our lives?