To fulfill my mentoring project, I served for fifteen hours at Model Lab School, located here on the EKU campus. I have learned many things from working with the kindergarten students at Model after school program. For young students, school is a major source of social interaction. Kindergarten allows children to establish interactive relationships with other students their own age. It also provides them with an opportunity to learn basic foundations, such as numbers and the alphabet. I now have first hand experience in ways to help the students creatively learn and interact with one another.

During four sessions, I had the opportunity to assist their kindergarten class in a variety of ways. I quickly realized that the students were adjusted to a routine schedule that was followed closely. This helped the students to know what to expect through out the day. They knew the rules involved with each activity, due to the repetition of their week. The students started off the afternoon with their lunch. As a helper, it was my job to encourage them to eat their meal. A way that I learned to do this was “hello bites”. When a child didn’t want to try an item of food, we would tell them to take this was to encourage them to try it at least once. I am used to trying all my foods at least once, so I took this for granted. The kindergarten students were not however. It was then that I realized that as a teacher, I would have to explain things that I already know, and sometimes take for granted. It is important as a teacher that I encourage my students to be involved. A creative way of doing this will encourage the students to learn.

I also played with the children outside on the playground. Initially I was disappointed that I wouldn’t be working with them on homework, or using flash cards. I had expected interactive learning. I quickly realized that playing on the playground is interactive learning for kindergarten students. Social development was a major part of this exercise. Since the students are five and six years old, they did not have an extensive history of being around fifteen other students their age. By playing with them on the playground I saw that simple activities such as sharing the bean bags, or time spent in the playhouse, allowed the students to interact with one another in a new way. This has taught me that students can learn in ways other than the usual classroom setting. The time on the playground not only helped them to release energy, but it allowed the students to learn how to interact with one another. I gained valuable experience in finding creative ways to teach students their alphabet, numbers and colors. Simple games, such as using colored beanbags with numbers on the back, created enthusiasm among the children. I also realized that my attitude affected the students’ attitudes. The more excited that I was, the more excited they became to be playing the games, and learning.

I also aided the teachers in preparing the kids for naptime. I came to realize that it is important for students to have time to rest. The kindergarten children are young, and their bodies need time to relax. I learned from this activity that no matter what guidelines are set; one student is always going to try to push them. This was the case with naptime. Each day there would be a student who ended up being separated from the rest. They would take their mat and be placed in an area where they would not affect the rest of the children. In education, all the children do not wish to learn, or in this case, sleep. When this happens, it is my job as a teacher to ensure that the students who desire to learn are not distracted by the ones who do not. It is my hope that I will
teach in a manner where all my students can learn, however, and all desire to participate
in the activities and lesson plans of the day.

I spent a portion of my time with the kindergarten class participating with them in-
group activities. Students would have a selection of activities, starting at one, and
rotating to the others. I thought that this was a neat idea. The students received
personal attention from the teacher at that station. That individualized time would not
have been possible had they not split up into rotation groups. I found that the students’
attention frame lasted longer this way. They seemed to be more excited to learn. I
enjoyed working with the students this way, because I feel that I got to meet their needs
more appropriately. When teachers and students get to have more personalized time, in
a group of three or four, I feel that the students receive more direct attention, which
allows their needs to be met more personally. I think this is a positive thing, which
should be implemented in all classrooms, whether during group activities or in teacher
and student conferencing for older students.

I feel that I have grown a lot from my mentoring project. It has helped me in
deciding whether or not I want to change my focus from secondary education to
elementary education. I have learned several different approaches to teaching that
would apply to all ages of students. I found my experience to be very encouraging. I
know now that teaching is something that I will love doing. The mentoring project has
reconfirmed that to me. I am excited to have had the opportunity to work with the
kindergarten class at Model Lab School.