My Mentorship Project

The focus of my mentorship project was on teaching basic sign language skills and the American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet to a small group of first grade students. I am studying ASL and considering the possibilities of a teaching career with the Deaf and I thought this would be a good experience for me as well as a benefit to the students. I asked the first grade teacher to select 3 or 4 students from her class for this project. I specifically asked her to choose students who don’t normally get to participate in any extra activities or ones who don’t usually have an opportunity to excel. In essence, I asked her to give me the ones who would be the more difficult to teach as opposed to the well behaved, accelerated students. I had two main reasons for this, I wanted a challenge, and I wanted to give those children a chance to feel special.

I would spend 50-60 minutes with my group of students 2-3 times a week. I would go get them from their class (while the rest of the class was working on something that would have been too difficult for them, according to the teacher) and we would go sit at a table in the lunchroom. Their names were Deidra, Elizabeth, Savannah, and Devin. The first day, when I told them what we were going to be doing, they were all very excited and eager to learn. By the end of the first hour, they had each learned to sign the letters in their names. They were so proud! The teacher let them demonstrate when we got back to the room and it was incredible. If that had been the only hour I spent with them, it would have been worthwhile. But it just kept getting better. Throughout the course of the sessions, I taught them the full alphabet, the signs for colors, foods, animals, and basic things like yes and no, please and thank you, and other common phrases. They all caught on very quickly, much quicker than most adults, and I did not have any
problems with them whatsoever. On the last day, I gave them a little quiz to see how well they had remembered everything and they all did excellent. I gave them treats and smiley faces for doing such great work and they all gave me big hugs and asked me to teach them some more.

These children were very proud of themselves and when I see them at the school now, they run up to me and proudly sign their name or something to me. I always teach them a new sign when I see them.

Some things that I have learned (or been reminded of) during this project include that all children are capable of learning and that children need and appreciate someone who will take the time to help them learn and grow. Also, that no matter what the challenge or the circumstances, it is truly rewarding to give something of yourself to others, and that one of the best ways to learn is to teach.