

PORTRAIT OF AN ASSOCIATE TEACHER

The perception of an associate teacher as a master teacher who passes on his/her knowledge and skills to a novice implies that an associate teacher not only displays a high degree of professional competence, but also possesses personal qualities that enhance his/her effectiveness as a teacher. From the perspective of the associate teacher, this lofty perception may cause a certain amount of apprehension: What are the qualities of a good associate teacher and do I have the right qualifications?

QUALITIES OF GOOD ASSOCIATE TEACHERS

In reality, the “ideal” associate teacher who possesses all the personal and professional qualities for training a novice teacher does not exist. However, there are qualities that associate teachers ought to strive for in order to carry out their task as classroom teachers and associate teachers effectively and responsibly. Good associate teachers:

1. recognize their own weaknesses and limitations and engage in constant self-evaluation of their own work as teachers. Such associate teachers demonstrate that they learn from their mistakes. They are willing to acknowledge wrong and to take action that sets things right again.
2. are learners who are constantly looking for better ways to instruct the children entrusted to them. Such associate teachers do not feel threatened by the presence of student teachers, but are willing to make the most of the experience to expand their own repertoires of teaching and planning skills.
3. are dedicated to the task of being Reformed teachers. Such teachers demonstrate loyalty to the goals and policies of the school and work as “team players” with their colleagues for the good of the children in the school. They display a high degree of Christian professionalism in dealing with or speaking about students, colleagues, and parents.

THE “IDEAL” ASSOCIATE TEACHER AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENT TEACHERS

Student teachers appreciate associate teachers who:

1. talk to them every day about their lessons and give useful feedback.
2. stay in the classroom often and long enough to be able to give a thorough evaluation.
3. do not use student teachers to do their marking or unit planning for them.
4. do not discuss their progress with a colleague or in their hearing. If a second opinion is required, associate teachers do it in private.
5. demonstrate trust in a student teacher’s abilities by leaving the classroom at times.

6. do not “tear a lesson plan apart” or change it just before the lesson is to be taught, but wait until afterwards.
7. encourage student teachers to evaluate themselves.
8. go through the evaluation form with the student teacher and explain why they gave the ranking they did on the various items.
9. can remember what it is like to be a student teacher.
10. share their teaching ideas, strategies, and methods.
11. allow the student teacher to develop his/her own teaching style.
12. realize that they, as well as the student teacher, are not perfect.
13. introduce them to the rest of the staff and make them feel welcome in the staff room.
14. are clear and specific about what they expect.
15. give student teachers time to observe before they must teach a certain subject.
16. show them how to use the photocopier.
17. introduce them to the class.
18. inform them about students who leave the room for special education classes.
19. provide them with an adult-sized work place.
20. are able to answer their questions about the observation day.
21. realize that a practicum session should give students new ideas, not exhaust the repertoire they have garnered so far.
22. allow them to be creative, but recognize that student teachers cannot be original all the time.
23. talk about and show how they plan on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis.
24. are professional in the staff room and meetings when they talk about others.
25. do not compare them to other student teachers.
26. show them where the resources and supplies are and indicate if they may freely use them.
27. do not make them feel like “a babysitter on duty with the parents still at home”.
28. plan teaching assignments a week, rather than a day, at a time.
29. spread out the lessons to be taught so there is time to observe at the beginning of the session and a gradual build-up of teaching assignments.