

Melissa Green  
Case Study Responses

## **Flipping Burgers** “Philosophy Response”

Question: “What are the virtues of a good mentor?”

I believe that a good mentor can transform an individual’s professional, academic, or personal life, depending on the defined areas of a mentor-mentee relationship. Strong mentors are regularly practicing reflection in their own life, have superb listening and observation skills, supports a mentee in reflecting on their experiences, and has a passion for the common topic that has brought the relationship together. An influential mentor has the goal of supporting a mentee in their growth and confidence. For this, the mentor must have strong self-confidence to allow room for differences of opinion and also to allow a mentee to possibly grow beyond what the mentor may have experienced in their life. The relationship should be grounded in respect, communication, trust, and encouragement.

I have had the privilege of being enfolded and supported by a good, reliable, and devoted mentor. She has provided me with countless hours of encouragement and even more hours of listening. She has helped me in my reflection and processing of my work and life experiences. She celebrates with me in my successes and supports me in further reflection when things have not gone as I have anticipated. The depth of trust between us means that she can speak her observations and constructive feedback, even when it is not what I want to hear, and at times when required, we can come together in apology. I have been guided and taught well. I have had someone to look up to as a role model, someone whom I hope I will continue to grow in the likeness of, as I continue to become more of myself.

As a read through “Flipping Burgers,” I see more of the virtues of a good mentor in the principal, Dianne, than I do in the veteran teacher, Kevin, who was chosen as her mentor. Kevin entered into the mentee-mentor relationship believing that he knew what was best and does not appear to have room for the possibility of the first-year teacher, Elizabeth’s success, through doing things a different way than he does. Kevin was eager to provide his opinion of the students, opinions that Elizabeth was not regularly welcoming. He does not appear to have taken the time to listen to Elizabeth’s experiences, wonderings, and curiosities for how she might support and encourage her students.

I have no hesitancy in acknowledging that a huge part of who I am today and where I am today is because I have been surrounded by a mentor who has enough confidence to speak truth, a consistent enough presence to express encouragement and support creative ways to solve problems. She has been a mentor with a strong enough self-confidence to support me as my wings have spread, and I have flown to levels of experience I could never have imagined. I believe that as a new teacher, taking the time to find a “teacher mentor” who holds some of the virtues shared here may be a transformative and supportive experience.

**Blurred Reflections**

## “Sociology Response”

Question: “Why do you think reflective journaling has become a cornerstone in the socialization of teachers into the teaching profession?”

I believe that one of the significant ways of growth and development, in teaching and other areas of life, is through the practice of reflective journaling. For myself, reflective journaling looks like I am taking the time to write down my experiences, questions, successes, failures, frustrations, observations, wonderings, and hopes. I believe that it is through my participation in written reflections, both in the process of writing and the process of going back and reading what I’ve written – days, months or even years later, that several things take place:

- I identify patterns;
- I explore different ways to solve a problem;
- Through describing and reflecting on an experience, I can begin to answer the “so what” question;
- I process and comprehend the experience(s) I have had;
- I reflect on my values, priorities, and beliefs and at times notice, where something held previously, is shifting;
- I process new ideas or feedback received;
- I can name my hopes goals and explore ways of getting to that place and, at times, see what needs to be let go of.

I think that this practice has become a cornerstone in the socialization of teachers because it is a helpful tool for learning and growth. As a Teacher Candidate, I am learning every day through lectures, projects, readings, and conversations. Through practicum, I am learning in yet another way – with many experiences taking place each hour in the classroom. With so much information, observations, conversations, and experiences, being taught and equipped to participate in reflective journaling is giving me a tool to document and process my experience while also providing the opportunity for growth and development.

Furthermore, these experiences are not limited to my teacher training, but I believe they will be the story of every day of my teaching career. I will always be unpacking a conversation, wondering how to support my students further, asking big questions, and trying to discover new ways of doing things that might connect with my students more clearly. I believe that it is essential for me as a teacher to be continuously reflecting and processing and to be checking in with my values, priorities, and beliefs – while also being prepared to notice shifts or changes. Reflective journaling is a place for me to acknowledge what has taken place and, at times, let things go, at least for a bit.

The practice of reflective journaling in the Bachelor of Education program is equipping me with the tools to carry it forward in my teaching profession. As a teacher candidate, I have consciously decided to see the “journaling” assignments as a life-long tool and not as “one more thing to complete for graduation.”

## **A Stitch in Time**

### **“Implications for Practice”**

Question: “How will you create a classroom culture in which parents and students feel that they can talk to you about their safety concerns?”

I believe that creating a classroom culture of respect, trust, and open communication is crucial to the success of a classroom and the success of each individual at the school. I want not only for my students to be successful academically and socially but also for them to know that my classroom is one where they can bring up any concern they have, specifically safety concerns. I want each student to see that they have the right to be in my classroom and feel safe every day. It is also important to me that students and parents know that I will do everything I can to support them, keep them safe and help to create a safe atmosphere for every person who walks through the door.

Creating this space does not come without intentional work. I would begin with regular communication with families – open communication about what we are doing in class both academically and socially. With my students in the class, I would be intentional about modeling ways of communication that are kind and respectful and engage in active listening with my students. I would not just model this, but I would also teach it: how to give constructive feedback, how to receive constructive feedback, what to do when big emotions are taking over, how to thank one another, how to apologize, and how to actively listen.

I believe that creating a classroom culture where parents and students feel like they can approach me to talk about their safety concerns begins with having a relationship. While it feels slightly daunting, I believe it is worth it. I will strive to make a connection with each student and their family in hopes that those connections will lead to a conversation and that conversations will help to create a relationship that is built on trust and respect. When there are trust and respect, I believe that the doors of communication about concerns are opened. I also think that such a relationship will help parents and students approach me with their concerns in a calm manner because they know that I am there for them and will do everything I can to keep each student safe.

I would hope that Kyle’s dad in the *A Stitch in Time* Case Study, may air his concerns in a different manner if a different classroom culture was in place. The case study names that the “school had failed not only Jayce but also Kyle,” – I hope that a different classroom culture might support both of these students and their families.