

Never Got a Chance

I had an occasion to mentor, or try to mentor, Gayle, a brand new teacher with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Gayle's previous experiences had been as a Deputy Sheriff in Los Angeles and as a teacher with preschool children. Gayle joined our staff in September as a sixth-grade teacher. She appeared very confident. She said that she neither wanted nor needed help in setting up her classroom or in developing curriculum units because of her previous experience.

As soon as I became aware that I would be Gayle's mentor teacher, I introduced myself as a friend and mentor and stated that I would like to observe her to see if there might be something I could do to help her get started. Gayle stated right away that there was nothing I could do.

About two weeks later my attention again focused on Gayle when she asked a question at a faculty meeting, "What does ESL mean?" Gayle also told about new techniques she was using in her class. The techniques were well tried for a thousand years. Therefore, after the meeting, I was very anxious to see her. I insisted on seeing her. I stated that I would like to see some of the wonderful things she had mentioned. Gayle firmly stated that she did not want a visit at that time because of a play they were working on and because of time conflicts.

I scheduled to see her anyway. She was absent that day, so I did not see her. Because of my schedule at other schools, I did not see her again until my principal asked if I would give her some help with her room environment and bulletin boards. I happily agreed. My principal mentioned that it was not going to be easy and said, "It's like walking on eggshells."

I again conferenced with Gayle in the cafeteria about visiting her room. She was very rude at this point. Unfortunately, I never saw Gayle in her classroom, even though I used a variety of foot-in-the-door techniques. At our monthly mentor meeting, a new mentor teacher had been added to our school and Gayle was put on her roster. At my last conference with Gayle's new mentor teacher, she told me she was having the same problem that I had had with Gayle. "Can I see you?" "No, you cannot!"

From: *The Mentor Teacher Casebook*, edited by Judith H. Shulman and Joel A. Colbert, Far West Laboratory and ERIC Clearinghouse, November, 1987