

piece of invaluable advice from American Jewish World Service: *Your chances of success will be greatly improved if you establish good relationships from the outset.* In addition, I approached the assignment with a “blank page” attitude (no preconceived expectations). I was not going to be “an ugly American,” but rather try to demonstrate respect and care for the people and their way of doing and seeing things. Thus I decided not to undertake any curriculum task activities in Ghana for at least two weeks, not until I had a chance to connect with the people there and learn about their customs, traditions, and behaviors.

Fortunately, on my first day, staffers from the Canadian embassy brought a DJ to Kinbu to entertain the children while the Canadians helped the crèche staff wash walls, windows, and floors. I was able to show the Kinbu staff that I could clean like the best of them. But perhaps the greatest impact came when they saw I could dance with them comfortably. I was off to a good start.

About 160 children go to the crèche at Kinbu, where there is one teacher for each age group of one- through five-year-olds. The 50 to 60 one-year-olds are also attended by two “minders” (aides), who spend most of their time in the bathroom changing pants and cleaning up.

During those first two weeks, I helped with lunch (hot, nutritious meals), observed each of the five teachers, demonstrated interactive reading and other teaching strategies, showed them how to use puzzles and games as teaching tools, and introduced and made visuals for the classrooms. For example, the teacher for the one-year-olds banged a spoon on a metal pot to get the children’s attention at the beginning of organized classroom activities; I demonstrated how to make the banging into a 1, 2, 3 counting and marching lesson.

Once I felt comfortable with the staff, and they with me, I held meetings with the teachers, assuring them that my assignment task—writing curriculum—did not include my evaluating *them*. To help win their acceptance, I intentionally incorporated their existing practices into the curriculum. I used free, available materials for teaching tools—like the time I demonstrated how to make

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