Children are able to grow and develop in different environments, many of which support children’s well-being, and others that we may or may not understand. Based on the cultural differences between teachers and students, both are able to communicate making it easier for teachers to understand children’s needs. In a situation where children come from a different background than the majority of the classroom, it is particularly interesting to see teachers accommodate to a culturally friendly environment for all children in the classroom. This way, children are able to learn about different cultures, while still being able to keep their own.

 One way in which I have seen this happen in the classroom is in the area of language. In the child development laboratory that I am employed and previously interned in, I am able to recognize the different ways in which the teachers make changes in the classroom every semester to accommodate children’s needs. For example, there is a child who is Korean-American and who speaks Korean at home. His parents shared their ideas with the teacher that they would like for their child to speak only English in the classroom which prevented the teachers from making major accommodations, yet they still managed to facilitate his language learning in a simple way. Around the classroom there are things that are translated into 3 different languages including Spanish, English and Korean, such as tables, mirrors, chairs, etc. This is a way that teacher’s changed their classroom environment to support the children’s learning environment.

I think that a course that has helped me better understand environmental context in which children grow and develop is an access and equity in education course that I took in the spring of 2013. We discussed different religious beliefs, ethnicities, social classes etc. We were also able to discuss the distinction there is between social classes and how it affects children’s everyday lives. For example, a child who lives in a rural area may or may not be able to have reliable transportation for school and it is more probable for him or her to miss class regularly, which might affect the child’s learning overall. Another example would be a child whose parents practice a different religion than those in the majority of the classroom. The religious beliefs might interfere with the education that the child might be getting in the classroom, which might make the child confused and not able to understand that there are many different religions. Once again, I think that having good communication between teachers and parents is key while trying to identify children’s different learning environments at home and at school. In a situation like this I would think that a parent might feel obligated to change their child to a religious school rather than go to a public school where beliefs differ. In addition, different ethnicities may or may not need extra support with the new language as I previously stated above. Not only might they need extra language, but they might also need help breaking the barrier between ethnicities if they are the minority coming from another place. I think that I experienced this first-hand as well when I moved to the United States at the age of 8 and I think that children need a lot of support in cases like this. When children come from different places from around the world it is very hard to understand the culture and the way of living of the new place. Children often tend to isolate themselves instead of asking for help. Overall, this course was able to give me a deeper understanding of different environments in children’s lives.

In addition, I think that another experience that I have had that facilitated my understanding of children’s environments was in the research methods course that I took in the fall of 2013. This particular course helped me understand and look into children’s environments while conducting research. The whole class was based on topics that were interesting to me and I decided to choose divorce and aggressive behaviors in children. In this class I was able to gain better understanding of the different kinds of aggression that children of different ages portray when their parents are going through a divorce. It was in this course that I realized that children have different things going on in their environment at home, which gave me a better perspective on parent and teacher communication to be able to meet the child’s needs in the school. In the process of choosing this particular topic I was able to conduct formal research and evaluate information using statistical evidence. I used the computer program SPSS and input information regarding experiments.

An assignment that is able to support what I have learned is the research paper that I wrote in my research methods in child development course. It was about the different kinds of children’s aggressive behaviors and parental divorce. In this paper I was able to fully research this topic and also plan an experiment with statistical evidence as backup. The experiment did not take place in actuality, but if I were able to do one, this is what it would have looked like. I was able to get my variables and support it with research-based evidence concluding that in fact, children develop aggressive behaviors when experiencing parental divorce.

A second assignment that helped me understand the different environments that children grow and develop is an essay regarding rural poverty done in access and equity in education course. This particular essay talks about rural poverty and the advantages and disadvantages that children face in their everyday lives. I was not aware of rural communities before taking this course and this research essay definitely gave me a deeper understanding of rural poverty.