Reflective Narrative #2

*SLO II. Child and Environmental Assessment and Study*

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of assessment issues and perform qualitative and quantitative assessments of children and their environments.*

Before starting my Child Development degree I knew very little about assessment. When I thought about what I was going to be learning while getting my degree I thought about the stages children go through when they are developing, how to work with children and help progress their development and factors that influence children. I never really thought about how important the process of assessment was when working with children

My first experience with assessment was my Individual Child Report in my Observational Techniques class at California State University, Chico. In the class we talked about the many different observation techniques there are when observing children and how to appropriately take notes on them in an objective manner. I learned how important it is to be objective when taking notes and how difficult it can be. When observing a child it is very easy to come up with an idea of what they are thinking and trying to accomplish. But in terms of observing and assessing them, it is extremely important to separate your opinion and be objective.

As I continued through my Child Development major I learned more about assessments. For example, I learned how assessments could be done on the teachers in the program as well as the environment. Assessing how teachers interact with children as well as assessing the environment helps directors and teachers take a step back to see what is working and beneficial for the children in their program and what needs improvement. I learned how time consuming an assessment is and how important it is to be organized while doing it. Lastly I learned how beneficial assessments could be. When doing an assessment like a Desired Results Development Profile on an infant you are looking to see how the infant is developing on a skew of items like motor, language, and social skills. Once you have completed this Desired Results Development Profile you will be able to the see exactly what the child needs to continue to work on and what they are excelling in. This allows a teacher to curve their educational plan for this child so they don’t fall behind in any areas.

The most important thing that I have learned about assessment is how much information you can gather from it. Whether you are assessing a child, teacher, or an environment, the amount of information you can gain is endless. When assessing a child you can see how a child is developing and where they are excelling and where they need more help. Teacher assessments can be beneficial for the director as well as the teacher. It will allow the teacher to take a step back and see how someone else assess their interaction with children and help that teacher grow in the future. Environmental assessments can show a program director if their environment incorporates all the aspects a child needs in order to develop and grow at an age appropriate rate. You can also use these assessments together. If you are completing DRDP’S for a toddler room and you see most toddlers are on the lower end for a development level like fine motor skills, you can do an environmental assessment to see if your environment is giving the children adequate chances to work on their fine motor skills.

The area of assessment I struggled the most to grasp was while observing and assessing to make sure I kept my own opinion out of it. It was difficult for me to write papers and notes and to always remember to not include words like “I” or “me” and to not say my opinion. It took me awhile to get use to it but through practice and continued note taking I am now able to successfully take objective notes.

In my Observational Techniques class at California State University, Chico we had to complete an Individual Child Report. When looking back on my Individual Child Report and I can see where I was learning how to take notes on children. Its shows mistakes where I would incorporate myself into the notes by saying things like “I saw” or “I witnessed”. It also shows how I had learned to correctly describe children behaviors by saying exactly what the child’s body was doing and not what I believed they were trying to accomplish.

Another class where I expanded my knowledge about assessment was Issues and Assessment for Families and Children. In this class we focused on learning about the different types of assessments and how they can be beneficial. One assignment in particular where we had to pick an issues in today’s society and write a paper about it really helped me learn a lot. I decided to do my assignment on the No Child Left Behind Policy. While writing this paper I learned how important it is to not only look at the child and assess the child but also the assess the teachers interacting with the child and the environment the child is learning in. By doing this we can see if the child is having difficulties in a certain developmental area because it is more difficult for them or if their environment and teachers are having an affect. A child can’t learn in an inadequate environment or with teachers not doing their job.

I think this will influence by future by allowing me to be aware of how to assess a program and what to do with the information that I gain from these assessments. I am excited to put what I learned into effect and can’t wait to help a child and program grow because of what I have learned from assessment.