*Student Learning Objective I: Foundations of Child Development*

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of the discipline.*

Over my time at Chico State in the child development major I have learned many different theories. Before, I started taking classes in child development the only theory I knew about was the attachment theory. Over my course work I have learned important theories in child development. I have learned that developmentally appropriate practice is important when working with children. Through Erickson’s theory I have learned that it is important when working with young children to understand the importance of providing specific types of interactions and environments to ensure positive social- emotional development. I have applied this theory by promoting children to express their emotions in an appropriate way. For example, when working with the four year olds I helped the children use their words when they were angry. I have applied Piaget’s theory by working in the infant classroom. Children do learn through actively exploring their environment through their senses, vision, hearing, and touch. Modeling and positive reinforcement are important things I have learned. I have applied these theories by modeling to the children appropriate behavior and using positive reinforcement. I have used positive reinforcement when working with the four years olds when they used their manners I gave the children praise.

Through observing children and family behavior it has changed how I think about children and families. Observing children has changed how I think about children in many ways. Before, I didn’t know that you could learn so much about a child just by observing them. Through observation of a preschooler and an infant I was able to learn; about their interests, developmental levels, skills, personalities and temperaments. Through observation I have been able to plan curriculum and learn children’s development strengths and goals. Families are the most important people in children’s lives and through observation this has been reinforced for me. While being a student intern in the infant room it helped me define that families are partners in the care, learning and development of their children. The internship allowed me to interact with families in the classroom and showed me how important it is to have a relationship with families.

Through my coursework and experiences in my internships I have learned that is necessary to take a little bit from each of the theorists and use it to guide my practice in the future. One important theory to me is the Reggio Emilia approach. In her approach parents are viewed as partners and advocates for their children.  Teacher’s respect families as each child's first teacher and involve families in every aspect of the curriculum. Family is very important to me and I think this theorist aligns with my philosophy. I also like this approach because the teachers develop general goals, activities, projects, and create the environment for the children based off the children’s interests and needs. All of the theories and foundations of child development I learned will guide my practice in the future. I would like to grow in the area of foundations of Child Development by taking classes in special education.