*Child and Environmental Assessment and Study*

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

 Throughout my higher educational experience, I have had the opportunity to not only learn about assessments and their importance within the lives of children in our society, but I have also conducted multiple assessments independently. It is amazing to learn that over a four year time period, I have grown so drastically in my ability to conduct both quantitative and qualitative objective assessments. While taking an observational techniques course, I learned the importance of remaining unbiased and objective while observing children within their natural environment. Techniques such as remaining unbiased and objective have played such a vital role both within my educational and career experiences.

 By choosing a major such as Child Development, I have been granted the opportunity to assess children and their environments through not only formal quantitative assessments, but qualitatively as well. Professors within my major have encouraged us to not only complete valid and reliable assessments, but also to interpret the collected data into a written language that could be understood by both the children’s family as well as Early Childhood Education Centers. I have been able to incorporate these new skills within my daily work at an Early Childhood Education Center through the writing of objective notes that document individual children’s developmental growth, completing an environmental assessment of my students’ classroom, and by providing fellow coworkers with accessible assessment techniques that they themselves can implement.

 My passion for assessment has been flourishing since my enrollment in a Methods of Inquiry in Child Development course. Though this course focused primarily on the methods of conducting professional research within Child Development, it opened my eyes at how important assessment truly is in regards to the advancement of research. In order to collect data on participants within any given study, researchers must first begin by identifying a valid assessment that reliably examines the variable in question.

 After the completion of this course, I was driven to enroll in the Honors Independent Study for Child Development so I could further my passion for assessment knowledge alongside a faculty mentor. By taking on this challenge, I have been lucky enough to incorporate what I have learned about assessment, within my undergraduate course work, and use this knowledge within the walls of real-life Child Development research. Weekly, I input data that has been collected from assessment surveys into statistical analysis software known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). When the data that we collect is qualitative, such as short answer written responses, it is my responsibility to interpret each statement and place it within the parameters of specific variables.

Overall, the most rewarding aspect of entering and interpreting the data collected from our assessments is discovering the patterns present among real-life children in today’s society. Whether it is the data collected for specific college course assignments, within the walls of my Early Childhood Education Center Classroom, or through my active engagement within my Honors Independent Study for Child Development, I have discovered that assessments are not simply tests. In reality, assessments are tools used to guide professionals in the assessment of children, as well as their environments. These assessments will then offer any resources necessary to optimize a child’s developmental potential.

In a Child Development Practicum course, I was able to complete an Individual Profile for an older infant within an infant classroom. The assessment that I completed for this course was known as a Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), and it provided me with the opportunity to examine a specific child across all developmental domains; Social/Emotional, Physical, Large Motor, Small Motor, Sensory, Health and Hygiene, Language, and Cognitive development. I was able to document my findings through writing objective notes as well as incorporating my quantitative findings into a qualitative narrative for the child’s parent to read.

In an Issues in Assessment for Children and Families course, I completed an entire environmental assessment. The assessment that I conducted was known as the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), and it was completed through the observation of an Early Childhood Education Infant Classroom. Though the assessment was completed through independent observations, inter-rater reliability was conducted with two additional partners, who observed at the same time, to provide reliability for our findings. This assessment taught me that when you assess a child’s environment, you must remain constantly aware of the vast amount of conditions that are present to make an environment positive.