*Critical Thinking*

*Students will apply critical thinking and scientific methods of thinking (including logical and empirical reasoning) to issues regarding children’s well-being.*

While attending California State University, Chico, I feel as if I have grown immensely in regards to my critical thinking skills. Upon entering my higher education journey, I truly did not consider the whole picture prior to making a judgment or a decision. By this I mean that through my old eyes, everything within the academic world was black or white or right or wrong, and I did not consider there to be a gray area. This original view of education, professional situations, and working with children has changed greatly over the years.

I have come to the realization that within every situation in which we are required to think, we must do so critically. Whether the situation at hand is logical or empirical, it is our job as professionals within Child Development to reason with all of the aspects present within the situation that is being examined. I have learned that when working with families you are doing just that, working with families. We are not required to just work with the child, but rather with the child and his/her family as an entire entity.

When we as professionals are working with a family as a whole, it requires each and every one of us to step back and examine the situation as a whole. We are required to not simply jump quickly and make a rational decision, but rather pull back and contemplate how our decision will ultimately impact this family as whole. While making this logical decision, we as professionals within the field of Child Development have been trained to also think empirically. By this statement, I mean that no matter what situation we are required to examine and think critically about, we must always fall back to the scientific method. This concept may seem a little intense, but if you truly think about it, we actually do this automatically.

Whether we are working with families, children, or coworkers we must think critically and with have a foundation in empirical thought. We must enter each situation with an introduction or framework of the entire situation. It is then our responsibility to consider a hypothesis, or an initial response, in regards to what the correct decision may be when working with the particular situation at hand. Next we must experiment. When it comes to experimentation within logical critical thinking, it means that we must examine alternative viewpoints, observe the particular situation in which we are supposed to make a judgment, and finally collaborate with peers. Finally, the last step of the critical thinking processes is to discuss and reflect the finale thought and rationale with the particular family. Within Child Development, we need to be capable of explaining to families why we are concerned, how we came to these concerns, what we are planning to do to assist in relieving these concerns, the rationale for these concerns, and finally we must reflect on how our response to this particular concern will be utilized and/or changed within future situations.

As you can see, during my college career I have come to learn that every situation is not simply just black and white, or right and wrong. Instead, every situation presents their very own shades of gray. It is our job to truly analyze all of the differences present in order to make the most effective and efficient decision. This decision may be specific to the situation we are working with, or it might be a decision that can be generalized across different situation. This decision is also one that requires us to think critically.

In a Child Development Research and Methods course, I was given the opportunity to think critically when writing a proposal for a research study. In order to complete this assignment, I needed not only to pick a topic to write on, but I also had to think critically about this particular topic. By thinking critically, I examined why this was a subject matter that I felt needed to be analyzed and researched. I was then provided with the opportunity to utilize the scientific method when composing the final draft of my research proposal.

In a Children in a Changing World course, I was able to work in a group to pick a topic that was influencing the lives of children globally. Through group collaboration and critical thinking, we were required to create a PowerPoint, present the PowerPoint within the class, and think critically about a way in which we could attempt to put an end to the global crisis. We chose the topic of child hunger worldwide to discuss with the class. Within our presentation, we thought critically by researching different statistics for child hunger, presented two scientific research studies to support our claims, and advocated ways in which we as a community and nation can get involved to end child hunger globally.