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

Assessment is treated as a term synonymous with “test,” or “examination.” Although these are not false words to describe assessment, to confine it as such would be false. According to Banks (2005), assessment is the entirety of all information gathered. If you had asked me at the beginning of my child development career, I would not have thought of assessment in Banks’ terms. I have learned that assessment means looking at the environment, children’s behavior, family relationships, peer relationships, and the child’s responses to different kinds of activities. While some of these are, in fact, tests, many of them are gathered through observation, or providing children the opportunity to informally perform these tasks in order to gather the information.

My concept of assessment began to take place in my Foundational Knowledge (CHLD 251) course at Chico State. In this class, we assessed a specific child on their abilities to perform certain tasks within these developmental domains: cognition, physical competence, and social-emotional competence, merely through naturalistic observation. My understanding of assessment furthered when interning for the class Child Development Practicum (CHLD 392), where we were student teachers in an early childhood setting. I learned about assessment here through the work of scaffolding and setting up activities for children to meet certain developmental goals. Scaffolding is something that I believe to be one of the most important things I’ve done in terms of assessment. Often, children are able to perform tasks without the prompt to do them. By scaffolding learning, children are able to achieve such tasks by learning through play and demonstrating their developmental level to the assessors (teachers and students). Finally, the concept of assessment changed for me through the class Assessment Issues for Children and Families (CHLD 440). I am currently enrolled in this course. As I have not yet completed it, my knowledge of assessment on a specific level is still growing, but I have grasped assessment as something we use, not only for the reasons I have listed above, but to identify issues within children’s development and pinpointing whether or not a child may have special needs.

The most important thing I have learned about assessment is how important it is in progressing our school system, and modifying it for students that are atypically developing. This is something that I learned in CHLD 440, through the example of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). No Child Left Behind requires schools to assume accountability for students meeting math and reading score standards according to grade level, including for students that are low-income or have disabilities. When students are not meeting the set standards of No Child Left Behind, the school should provide assessments in order to determine if some students, in fact, have learning disabilities. This would cater to student’s learning needs and, in turn, raise scores—creating personal success as well as meeting academic standards. When this is not done, the schools are omitting their accountability. Due to the nature of this accountability it is paramount to the progression of our school system that schools administer assessments correctly and report specific issues in order to make sure standards are being met.

The concept I struggle with the most regarding assessment is the idea of identifying “the truth.” Meaning, that the assessment is valid in its purpose of diagnosis. This can be found by looking at “true positives,” “true negatives,” “false positives,” and “false negatives.” These identifiers allow us to see what the proctor of the assessment hit or missed when trying to identify whether or not a child has special needs. There are formulas that correspond to this assessment in order to statistically show the number of true positives or negatives and false positives or negatives gathered throughout the assessment. I am struggling to understand this concept, but am confident that upon putting it in to practice it will no longer be particularly difficult.

The first assignment I am submitting that demonstrates assessment is my “Summary and Recommendations” that I provided for my case study child for CHLD 251. Here I describe the child physically, but which activities she enjoys participating in most, how she enters play, and what activities could be implemented in the classroom to better allow her to improve upon more lacking skills. I believe that this demonstrates assessment because it objectively depicts the abilities of a child and describes both the child’s strong suits and areas for improvement, while also addressing that she is a typically developing child.

The second assignment I am submitting is the evidence table of my target child for CHLD 392. The evidence table displays anecdotal notes taken on almost all completion of measures for the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). I believe this document displays assessment because it shows the target child’s abilities to perform tasks at a typically developing level, where the child excels, and where the child can improve.