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

Throughout my studies in the Child Development department at Chico State I have been able to apply critical thinking and scientific methods throughout a variety of assignments and courses. Throughout my time in this department I have been required to think critically in many of my courses, especially when learning about new theories and assessments, but also on the job throughout my many internships. Thinking critically in the world of Child Development, may look differently then it would in other majors or departments. Being able to think critically in child development means being able to apply knowledge and theories learned in the classroom to real life and hands on experiences within the field.

One of the courses that especially required me to think critically and use scientific methods of thinking would be my “Methods of Inquiry in Child Development” course. This class was my first introduction into scientific methods specifically having to do with Child Development. In this course I was required to do extensive research on a topic of my choosing. This was the first time I had done such a lengthy research paper, requiring me to analyze multiple research journals. I was introduced to statistical terms and methods that I had only ever worked with in math classes. I was able to look at actual results from studies and make sense of the information presented to me. Along with this class, a course entitled “Issues in Assessment for Children and Families” also required me to think critically, while using scientific methods. This course focused more on the logistics of Child Development, requiring me to ask what, when, why and how. I have been introduced to specific assessments used in the school system, as well as assessments used in home visitation programs when working with families. This class has required me to analyze and understand the methods used to assess children and families, and what their benefits, and drawbacks are. When learning about assessments it is not a topic that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, yet it is required that the assessments and results are looked at critically, and that the results are interpreted correctly.

Throughout my on the job experiences and internships I have been required to think critically and logically everyday. During my first time conducting observations in the Associated Students Child Development Lab I was required to observe children from a completely objective point of view. However, the further I advanced in the department the more critical my observations and interactions became. When working one on one with children in the classroom it is important to look at the situation critically and judge what is going on based on the information gathered about the classroom and the students within it. When you’re interacting with the children one on one it is important to take all things into consideration. In my current internship, working with in the counseling department of a local middle school, thinking critically is incredibly important and valuable. It is important for me to be able to investigate where the child comes from and critically analyze the situation presented in front of me. When working with families and children knowing as much as you can about their background is very beneficial.

In terms of critical thinking and scientific methods I think the thing I have struggled with the most is the scientific method part. When thinking critically it is important to pull from theories and research that I have analyzed and been taught in my classes. I sometimes have a hard time remembering particular theories or ideas. I think after being in this program for about three years everything starts to blend into one gigantic theory or idea. I think that I could benefit from going over certain theories and theorist and be able to reference them immediately. Although I am very knowledgeable in many theories in Child Development I don’t want people to discredit me if I am not able to remember the exact theory or theorist every time.

As a member of the child development profession I find myself thinking critically about children and families everyday. I often find myself analyzing interactions between children and adults, whether it be in person or even on TV. Sometimes I find myself being a bit critical of others when interacting with children because my brain has been trained to look at children in a certain way. I am highly aware when a parent or adult is talking to a child in a way that is not beneficial to that child’s development. As a Child Development professional I am required to think critically and be observant of these interactions and it is sometimes hard for me to just sit back and watch. When I am in a professional setting I am not scared to share my opinions at all, but I do not feel comfortable sharing things with people when it is not my place. I would never want a parent to think I was trying to tell them how to parent. With that in mind however I will continue to educate parents and adults alike on Child Development and certain theories and techniques I have learned about. I will present this knowledge in a way that does not come across as telling someone what to do, but rather educating them on my field of expertise. I will always report a situation that I feel is unsafe, when a child is involved. Being in this department and choosing this major has taught me things that go way beyond the classroom. Thinking critically and using scientific methods is not something that will stop when I graduate, it is something that will continue throughout my entire career, regardless if I even I stay in this field or not.

One assignment that has documented my knowledge of critical thinking and scientific methods would be my research project for my “Methods in Inquiry of Child Development” course. This research paper greatly demonstrates my ability to not only think critically but to use and analyze scientific methods. This paper required me to analyze many research papers and apply theories and knowledge gained in other classes to the overall paper. I was required to do extent research and be able to present it all in a well organized critical manner, while answering the important questions of who, what, when, why and how.

Another assignment that documents my knowledge on this topic would have to be a self-reflection assignment for my “Child Development Practicum” course. This assignment required me to analyze my skills and overall development in the course, which required the use of critical thinking. This assignment was actually a bit difficult because it forced me to look critically at my achievements in the classroom, as well as my progress throughout the semester. The assignment states the goals I hoped to achieve in the classroom and whether or not I believe I had achieved them. It required me to think logically and analyze my overall performance. The assignment also required that I write myself a letter of recommendation, which required me to take a step back and critically analyze my strengths, weaknesses, and overall abilities.