Assessing children and families is a vital part of applied research in the child development field, as well as finding problems or delays in specific children and how to help them. Starting out in the child development major, I do not think I understood the importance of using assessments. And going further than just using assessments, creating and making sure they are valid is another whole part that I was not aware of. Everything that goes into an assessment of children and families is more complicated than I had thought.

This knowledge has been expanded by a number of classes I have attended at Chico State. I learned about the differences between quantitative and qualitative assessments and how both are used to assess diverse aspects of a family’s life. Going through a curriculum practicum course, I was required to complete a full assessment on a target child. I saw first hand how this measure, if completed accurately, could provide detailed demonstration of a child’s physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive skills and how they are developing. Working on this measure, a DR-DP (Desired Results-Developmental Profile), I was able to collect anecdotal notes and use them to determine where the child is on a spectrum of each part of the measure, from responding to certain experiences all the way to integrating that measure into their everyday life. In working closely with the child, I was also able to form a relationship with him and have many close interactions with him, resulting in a stronger understanding of his developmental abilities.

I think that the single most important thing I have learned about assessments is to be objective when assessing and observing children and families. In an observation class, I learned how to be objective when assessing and the importance of it. While observing a target child, I kept my own judgments about his behavior out of the assessment and was able to find out information about his development. This is imperative because it assures that judgments do not interfere with the actual data that is being collected. Subjective information can possibly contaminate the data by placing unconfirmed information into the assessment. This was a slight challenge to begin with because I had a hard time keeping certain judgments out of my data collection, but after practicing anecdotal notes for a couple years now it is easy to keep my own judgments out.

In learning about assessments, I came across some greater challenges as well. The statistical analyses portion of assessments was hard for me because I have never been good at math or statistics, so when learning about how certain incidents affect the sample of data, I often was confused or did not understand how the data was analyzed to accommodate these effects. During a class learning about the methods to collect data and use statistical analysis, I was required to do statistical data analysis and interpret the results. This was manageable because I was only inputting numbers into a spreadsheet and clicking a button to get the results, however I never grasped the reasons behind the computing these numbers. After this class, I was still uneasy about the statistical information about assessments.

Starting out in Child Development, I thought assessments were as simple as the standardized tests required in mostly elementary through high schools to make sure students were where they were supposed to be developmentally. As I have gone through this major, I have learned the importance of assessing not only children but their families and environments as well. I also was made aware of how to make sure assessments are valid and reliable and the different type assessments to use for a various array of people being assessed. I would now be able to now use the knowledge I have acquired about assessments to determine developmental delays with children.