SLO II Child and Environmental Assessment and Study Reflective Narrative

I have learned that there are many different forms of assessment. I have also learned that one of the primary formal forms of assessment is direct observation; the act of observing children objectively in their most natural settings. We objectively observe children to gain a better understanding of where they are developmentally. When I first began observing children in their natural settings, and taking anecdotal notes, I had no idea that I could not write about how the child was feeling. I also didn’t know how I was feeling about what I was seeing, or even how to write my notes in third person. I began writing as if I were talking directly to another person and I wrote everything I saw. My notes at that time lacked many of the things that I really needed to be writing down. I originally thought I was supposed to be documenting about the five senses; what I could see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. I was so proud of myself the first time I turned in my notes, because I had been able to observe and document so much information. I knew that it was very descriptive and there were plenty of notes. I was feeling proud of my work, until my first note taking critique when I found there were many changes to my writing style that needed to be adjusted.

There was red markings throughout the notes I had gathered, from my observation instructor Kathy McAfee. I was relieved that I had taken more notes than necessary for this assignment, but confused about what had been written down in the “changes to be made” section of my notes. I was first instructed to make a change from writing in first person to third person. It was explained to me that I needed to write as if others did not know who ‘I’ was. The second correction I needed to make was to take out all the feeling words, or words that described the child’s emotions. It was then that I learned that I could not document what I cannot see. I cannot see feelings and I cannot see thoughts; so my claims that a child was sad, mad, frustrated, happy on a particular day were inaccurate. I now know that I can document things I can see that might mean someone is happy, like a smile, or a giggle, but I still cannot make a claim that they are happy. In my edited notes I now know, that my feelings about the child’s actions were also irrelevant. I was told that I needed to be more concise and intentional in my note taking and document smaller interactions in more detailed ways.

After transferring to Chico State, and entering the Child Development Practicum course, it was here that I learned I needed to pay special attention to how a child was manipulating things in his/her environment. I needed to make sure that I documented which hand the child was using, and what type of grasp they were using. I also discovered in my Issues in Assessment for Children and Families course that observation was not the only form of assessment important to the Child Development field. I discovered the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and I was able to put this tool into use in my Child Development Practicum course. During my practicum experience in the Associated Students Child Development Lab (ASCDL), I was able to learn about all the measures that early childhood educators used to evaluate developmental levels of children. I was taught what to look for from the child with each measure, and how to determine their level of development within each measure. I was also taught how to create, and implement the curriculum that would help me obtain each measures goals.

The most important thing that I have learned about assessment is the importance of using objective observation. Along with objectivity, I would also say validity and reliability are equally important things to keep in mind. Overall if I had to pick one important thing I have learned in the process of assessing children, it would be to keep personal bias out of my observations and to be more objective than subjective in my documentation. Observational documentation is used within many different occupations in the child development field. In the future, I aspire to become a social worker, this is why I chose to focus on the one form of assessment I will be performing the most in almost all of my future endeavors.