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.

When I first started taking Child Development courses, I had no idea what an assessment was, how they worked, or why I needed to know about it for my career. As I took courses, I realized that assessments were ways to analyze children as individuals, understand challenging behaviors and how to enhance learning in a classroom setting. I’ve always know that a classroom environment was important, but never gave it much thought as to how important it really was.

I’ve taken many courses at California State University, Chico and one of the courses I took that had a big influence on me in regard to assessments was Child Development Practicum. During this course, I had the chance to choose a child to observe and take notes on for the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). By observing the child, I would write down what he would say or do in a notebook, and then go home and figure out what measurement and level of development the child was at. From observing the child so much, I learned a lot about him. I learned his likes and dislikes, how close he was to his mother and grandmother, and most importantly I learned how he was developing when it came to learning. At the end of the semester, I learned that most preschool age children learn from each other and from the curriculum that get set up by the teachers. Observing children really helps out teachers by being able to enhance children’s ability to learn and grow as an individual. I also learned that assessments help educators figure out if a child has learning disabilities or if it is something minor, such as a hearing or visual problem.

The next class I took that stood out to me was Professional Seminar in Child Development: Current Issues. In our classroom we had many guest speakers about many different subjects that were related to current issues that might be going on at home that we might not notice if we don’t pay attention to the children in our classroom. I remember going over the subject about how important it is for a child to feel safe at school. School is the one place children should feel safe no matter what is going on outside of school. This is when I started looking at the environments in school setting and asking questions: Is it safe for children? Do the teachers support and met the children’s needs? Do the teachers have a positive relationship with the child and the parent? And most importantly, do the children feel safe and secure at school? From taking this course, I have learned that the environment of where a child or children come from can have an effect on the way they learn. Learning in an environment that is positive and healthy alone is enough for children to learn successfully. When children feel safe, and have meals provided for them, it makes it a lot easier for them to learn new materials and explore the world around them.

Throughout my learning of assessment I feel like the most important thing to remember is to observe the children to better understand them in the way they learn, and apply what you learn from observations to modify the program in order to adapt to the environment, daily routines, and teaching strategies. I believe when you have successfully understood the concept of assessments, teaching becomes fun for everyone and teachers see drastic results at the end of the year. One thing that I have struggled with when doing assessment is avoiding preconceptions and writing exactly what I see that is happening in front of me.

When I took the course of Child Development Practicum, I had to write weekly journals about what I had learned or done that day. I wrote about problems I had during the day and how I either solved them or asked for help. I also took observation notes twice a week for 16 weeks on a target child of my choice and based off of those observation notes, I would fill out the DRDP and find the measurement to see where the child’s developmental level was at. I have also learned that language is very important when working with children of any age. The way teachers model language is an important part of teaching preschool age children because children repeat words they hear every day and are listening and curious about the world around them.

When I took the course, Professional Seminar in Child Development: Current Issues, I had to write a reflection based on the guest speakers that had came during the class meeting that night. We would get all kinds of speakers come to talk to us about issue that relate to children, starting with child abuse, child neglect, how judges help families dealing with drugs or alcohol problems, and working with children who have autism. Thanks to this course, I have learned to really look at the environment in a classroom setting and how to detect when something isn’t right with a child. I have learned that the environment is really important in a child’s life and can affect the child in a positive or negative way.