*SLO V. Critical Thinking*

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

The field of Child Development has taught me more than I could ever imagine. Thanks to my wonderful courses and professors I have learned how to cater to children both in their needs and in their well-being. I have learned to cater to children by applying critical thinking and reasoning along with my knowledge of child development. I have shown my knowledge in the area of critical thinking by understanding, assessing and implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices for children, mastering the thought process in critical thinking and placing importance on the issues regarding child’s well-being using logical and empirical reasoning.

Prior to my courses in Child Development, I thought critical thinking was a thing of science. I associated critical thinking with the application of the scientific method. Through my studies in both my general education courses and my Child Development courses, I have come to understand that the scientific method can be used in all majors. In Child Development, one uses the structure of the scientific method when assessing and evaluating a child. Each component of the process of the scientific method can be applied to child development. The first step is making observations which is something I am no stranger to as a Child Development major; when making observations one learns a vast amount of information about the child’s strengths, areas of growth, likes, dislikes as well as the child’s attachment.

The second component of the scientific method is formulating a hypothesis, followed by testing said hypothesis. A hypothesis is a guess or prediction, the hypothesis can be a guess based on what the observer saw or didn’t see during the observation. For example, in my class Child Development Practicum I used the ideal of scientific method for my internship in the infant room at the Associated Students Child Development Lab at Chico State. Based off weeks of observation a partner and I created an inquiry based on our knowledge and observations of the environment. During meetings with the student and career staff it was introduced that some Spanish speaking parents wanted their children to be taught in both English and Spanish. Based off of that information and our observation, my partner and I decided to implement Spanish into the routine in the infant room. Our hypothesis was that children would be able to recognize words in Spanish after our implementation. The final part in the scientific method is analyzing the results of the experiments. After weeks of implementation and observations we concluded that both Spanish speaking and non-Spanish speaking children were both receptive and expressive towards the language.

As a member of the child development profession, I have learned that critical thinking is using knowledge, information and experience gathered from my schooling and using it to make informed decisions. Through my courses at California State University, Chico I have used and demonstrated critical thinking when working with children. I have been able to look at a situation critically, assess the situation and create a possible outcome. Thinking critically allows me to hold back judgment and merely look at the situation at hand. When thinking critically I must use what I know about children and about development and incorporate it into my assessment of the child. Using prior knowledge I can allocate where the child is developmentally and can figure out the best way to approach my findings.

An area in critical thinking that is of great importance is logical and empirical reasoning when looking out for the child’s well-being. Working as an intern and as a student staff in the Associated Students Child Development Lab, I have learned about the importance of the child’s well-being, both in the stances of my ethical responsibility and their development. All children develop differently and at different rates and speeds because of that reason what may be right for one child may not be right for another. I believe that a big component of using logical and/or empirical reasoning is understanding that all children are different. It is important to think logically and not hold children up at too high of a standard or comparing them with children who may be below or higher developmentally then they are. Trying to engage children in tasks that are too low or too far from their zone of proximal development would be doing them a disservice.

The first assignment that I believe showcases my progress and abilities in the area of critical thinking is the assignment Curriculum Deep Thought #2 for my class Child Development Practicum. In this assignment I created a list of children who I frequently interacted with in my internship, using the list and my observation I created a bigger list of children’s likes, dislikes, strengths and areas of growth. From there I created a one-day curriculum based on every child’s needs and gave my rationale for the importance of the activities. I believe this assignment showcases my abilities because I was able to think critically to develop developmentally appropriate curriculum for children 8 months to two years of age.

The second assignment that I believe showcases my progress and abilities in the area of critical thinking is my summary and recommendation for a case study I created in my class Observational Techniques. I believe this assignment showcases my progress and abilities because over a span of three months I collect data on one child and was able to create a case study using my knowledge in child development. I was then able to critically analyze my information and created developmentally appropriate recommendations for ways to increase the child’s overall well-being.