Reflective Narrative SLO 1: Foundations of Child Development

Student Learning Objective 1: Foundations of Child Development: *Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of discipline.*

I have learned a lot throughout my time studying Child Development, through direct experience with children as well as learning theories and reading academic research in various classes. I think this objective is important, because having knowledge about the field of child development is essential in order to be able to work with children effectively.

A theory I have learned about that has changed how I understand development is Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. The theory asserts that children both influence and are influenced by various “systems” in their lives, such as the cultural context in which they exist, their environment, their parents, and many more factors. I like this theory because it shows how children can be affected by so many factors, and how important it is to understand the influences of those factors to understand a child’s behavior and development. Learning this theory made me realize how important it is to examine children’s behavior in the larger context of what is influencing it. It also made me more of aware of how changing the environment or other external factors can have a significant impact on a child’s development.

Interacting directly with children and families has also changed the way I view the discipline of child development. Throughout my time studying Child Development, I have been fortunate enough to have had numerous opportunities to work with children and families in a variety of settings, including two different preschools, three different elementary school classrooms, and an after-school program in a transitional living facility for homeless families. Through these experiences, I have learned how to work with children of a variety of age groups and abilities. I have also learned the importance of the environment’s influence, and how to modify environments to create a positive learning atmosphere.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory has helped guide my practice with children, because it taught me the importance of examining children’s behavior in a larger context to understand the root of it, and how many factors contribute to it. Realizing how children’s behavior is affected by outside factors and circumstances makes it easier to understand and find a solution. I hope to continue to improve in my knowledge in the field of child development as I gain more experience with children.

One assignment I have done that reflects my understanding of Child Development is a lesson plan I wrote is a lesson plan I wrote for a preschool class, as part of my internship for an internship class in Child Development. The curriculum I was implementing in the preschool was based off a curriculum book called *Mind-Up*, which was intended for preschool through second grade. I had to modify the suggested lesson from the book so it would effectively fit with preschoolers’ developmental capabilities, showing that I have an understanding of Child Development and what is appropriate for different age groups.

Another assignment I have done that documents my understanding of Child Development is a summary I wrote about my classroom management philosophy for Introduction to Democratic Principles in K-12 teaching. In my paper, I wrote about how essential classroom management is to creating an environment that is conducive to learning. As the paper articulates, I think that setting high expectations, modeling appropriate behavior, and giving children opportunities to reflect on how their behavior affects others can minimize the likelihood of behavioral problems arising. I also wrote about how awareness of what is developmentally appropriate is necessary to preventing behavioral problems. For example, with young children, breaking up periods of instruction with opportunities for movement can decrease instances of children fidgeting or behaving disruptively. I also explained how much of an effect the environment can have on behavior. I think my classroom management philosophy shows knowledge of Child Development and how I would utilize that knowledge in a real-life situation, such as when managing a classroom.