*SLO IV. Professionalism*

*Students will engage in professional behavior appropriate to the discipline in professional contexts.*

Our experience in higher education within this discipline has been associated with this idea of professionalism in all forms. We think that professionalism consists of behaviors and dispositions in regards to collaborating together with a team. Examples of specific aspects of professionalism can include personal dress, communication, composure, leadership and working with an anti-biased approach. As child development professionals, it’s imperative that we practice professionalism in a variety of settings with co-workers, professors, families, and peers. We must be able to understand professional ways of communicating with others and our internships help prepare us for those conversations. For example, in our child development practicum course, we were required to attend a parent-teacher conference at the end of the semester, which required us to dress professionally, introduce ourselves, and participate in conversations about a parent’s child, which can be personal and confidential, so being professional was a definite requirement. This experience was a great example of the sensitive nature of our work and how we encounter different situations related to confidentiality that require us to use or develop our professional skills.

Being a professional does require a great deal of skill, knowledge, and disposition to be able to be successful within this learning objective. The ability to communicate and demonstrate reliability, honesty, and collaboration is an important skill as a professional. As

for our values, we agreed upon the idea of practicing awareness and acceptance of differences in all different contexts. Having an anti-biased approach is a skill that we value, and it’s

important that we recognize that everyone comes from a different background and respecting that background is another aspect of being a professional. Not only do students need to possess and practice these skills, but they also need to do so with intent and efficiency. Being able to communicate is one thing, but being able to communicate professionally, respectfully, and effectively is another. Child development professionals need to value professionalism and practice it enough to where it becomes natural in a variety of settings. One skill that I personally value the most in my work would be collaboration. Being able to collaborate professionally with others is a skill that greatly benefits you and the child. Collaborating with all of those who influence or affect a child’s life day to day is the most valuable way to help a child develop, learn, and excel in almost every circumstance. It also enhances the consistency in the guidance and expectations of different adults in the child’s life like teachers and parents.

We have grown in relation to this learning objective primarily in our internships outside of class, as well as in projects and peer assignments. Having the freedom to choose our internships and interests has allowed us to grow and practice independence. This also allowed us to demonstrate our abilities to be responsible. Megan’s self-confidence in particular began during her first internship within child development at a bi-lingual preschool. This school was unassociated with our major and our department, which left her feeling uneasy, but the SLO allowed Megan’s professional side to come out. This internship allowed Megan to understand the depth within this learning objective, and showed Megan a new environment and context that she hadn’t experienced before. Since then, Megan’s apprehension has minimized, and she’s been able to experience the benefits and excitement of working in new environments, instead of the fear and uneasiness.

We would like to do better in this area by practicing our research abilities. We want to be able to find research and then apply that research to our professional career or out in the field. We have had experience conducting research and writing up empirical research studies, but we haven’t felt like we have seen research implemented completely and professionally. We would like to feel more confident in our writing abilities, and research. As life-long learners, we will continue to stay positive, and forgive ourselves when situations don’t go as planned, because mistakes do happen in any professional situation. We will do our best to stay educated and remain current in the field long after our higher education has ended. We believe that the process of learning never truly ends, so it is important to continue gaining more knowledge in the child development field and stay aware of new theories, concepts, and best practices.

Some of the best aspects of our professionalism are and were demonstrated in several situations and assignments. We would say that we are the most proud of our achievement with families and parents in general. We feel like we have a growing confidence in our field as we gain more experience in new environments. Working with parents and communicating in multiple roles, as a teacher or director, has helped us

practice our confidence and abilities. In addition to confidence and ability, we are proud of our listening skills as a professional with each and every person we work with. We

hope to continue our strength with communication and generalize these abilities within new contexts in our futures.

One assignment that illustrates Megan’s experience with professionalism was in an observational techniques course where she was required to observe a child in a lab setting, and complete an anecdotal recording to demonstrate language development. This assignment documented her progress and abilities because she was in a confidential and private setting that required professional and appropriate behavior. The recording had strict guidelines and structure that needed to be followed in order to complete the assessment, and Megan had to be focused during that observation time. This was a new professional context for her, which allowed her to grow in this learning objective because it was her first time in the lab observation booth, and Megan hadn’t completed an anecdotal recording before. The assignment needed to be concise, detailed and professionally written, which allowed Megan to expand her knowledge and skills in a variety of ways.

To illustrate her engagement and understanding of what it means to conduct herself in a way that is professional, Bridget felt that her work in her inquiry course reflected professionalism wholly. She had to complete a power point that was formed from a semester long inquiry done with a partner that required professional conversation and collaboration. Bridget and her group encouraged a class of 2-3 year olds to participate more in active play through music and dance. She gathered data through

observations and pictures and compiled her findings into a presentation. In conclusion, we all feel proud of our experiences that reflect our personal growth within this learning objective and we feel eager to continue learning and growing as experts and professionals in the field of child development.