Reflective Narrative SLO 2: Child and Environmental Assessment Study

Students will demonstrate knowledge and assessment issues and perform qualitative and quantitative assessments of children and their environments

Child and environmental assessment are essential when trying to interpret or figure out what is best for a child. Assessing a child and their environment is important because it can help guide them toward a healthy development according to their specific individual needs. Throughout my child development career, I have learned that every child comes with a different background including: different types of family structure, values, and environments, which all need to be taken into consideration when observing specific attitudes and behaviors a child might be displaying in the classroom. This shows the significance of assessment because the main goal is to improve the child’s performance or setting through collecting distinct data, in order to provide an individual plan or service that will help the child succeed to their greatest potential.

I have been given great opportunities within the child development major when it comes to gaining experience in assessment. Beginning with my early child development courses; for example observational techniques, we were taught to observe children in an objective way, while excluding all judgment and inferences we might have on the child’s behavior. In my supervised practicum internship in the infant and toddler room, I had to assess my target child using the Desired Results Developmental Profile, where I was able to practice assessing different developmental areas of the child. My understanding of assessment has grown as I have had one-on-one experiences with different children at different ages in development within their classroom environment. I think the first step towards learning about assessment was understanding the difference between research and assessment.

Before being educated and trained on how to assess a child and their environment, I did not know that there was a difference between research and assessment. To distinguish the difference between the two, my Methods of Inquiry in Child Development course taught me about the difference between research and assessment. Research involves searching for new information on a topic in order to establish new generalizable facts, or to confirm or test previous theories and hypotheses. Usually the information that is found through research can be applied to a large population and the audience for research studies is for academics. In contrast, assessment is focused on one individual’s needs in order to produce the right type of intervention, diagnosis, academic plan, or program improvement for the child. I have gained a better understanding between the two with first hand experience as well.

When working at my previous job as an early interventionist with children with autism, the first few meetings I had with the child and parent were to help give my program manager and myself an understanding of who the child is, what the child is exceeding in, and what the child might be struggling with. This was our first step of assessment, plus the importance of building a relationship with the child, in order to distinguish what the child’s interests are and what the child lacks interest in. After a few sessions of relationship building, we began to prepare a set of goals for the child and what activities will help the child reach those goals. For each one of my clients, I would have a different set of goals and activities planned for each individual. At the end of every session, I would write down observation notes and reflective journals about certain behaviors the child may have displayed independently, activities the child liked or disliked, and any progress or regression being made.

Working with children with autism gave me insight and practice with assessing a child and their environment. I found that during assessment it is important to keep the parents or family involved because once an intervention or service plan has been made for the child, support and understanding from loved ones is needed. For example, I had a client who was striving once his goals were developed and applied to his everyday routine because his mother was so passionate, supportive, and cooperative when it came to following through on the intervention goals. While I had other clients, where it felt as though I was babysitting for the parents, and the child was not progressing because the intervention goals were not being applied when I was not there. When being an assessor and developing a specific plan for the child, it is important that there is a team effort in order to give the child the help they need.

There are other areas of assessment that I am not as familiar with, for example, figuring out school readiness and screening psychometrics. In my Assessment Issues in Children and Families course, we were taught the importance of school readiness when it comes to deciding early intervention for a child and how to screen the child to figure out if an intervention is needed or not. This is clearly an important aspect when making first steps in assessment in a classroom; however, I could use a bit more practice in understanding it better.

I did have the opportunity to practice my assessment skills hands on in two child development classes, where I experienced very beneficial assignments. The first one was in my observational techniques course, where I was assigned a target child to observe throughout the entire semester. This assignment helped me practice my first assessment skills by learning how to properly observe a child. The most important information I took from the class was observing in an objective manner, while excluding any judgement and inference I may have.

Another assignment that helped me develop better understanding of assessment was in my supervised practicum course where I interned in the infant/toddler classroom and was assigned a target child to work with the entire semester. In this assignment, the main goal was to collect enough observations on the target child to complete the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). The DRDP is a tool used to show the parents and teachers what level of development the child is at. Working with the DRDP and my target child, gave me great understanding of how long an assessment of a child and their environment could be; however, the results and outcome are important documentation to have when trying to understand where the child is at in their development.