*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.*

As Child Development Professionals, we need to be able to think critically to make decisions about what is best for a child and their family. We also think it is important to be able to analyze research to further our own knowledge of Child Development. It is also important to have basic knowledge about how to understand research and then interpret it. When working with this kind of material, it can be a great aide when dealing with families and children. Our Child Development courses have taught us how to use our critical thinking skills to properly observe children’s behavior in order to analyze their development and discover their needs. Critical thinking can also be used to help us learn in situations and what to do better in the next.

Critical thinking skills and abilities require needing to be able to ask questions, use resources or previous knowledge, and also being open minded. There is a process to using critical thinking and it’s important that we have the skills to know what to do, such as, asking questions, using skills to evaluate and support the finding. We also think that interpretation is important because it allows one to digest information and understand what it means. Another key critical thinking skill is being able to analyze different types of research. Analyzing means being able to connect different pieces of information together to understand the greater underlying meaning of what the information is supposed to represent. Evaluation is an important critical thinking skill as well. It is essential to be able to look over information and be able to tell if it was credible and also tell whether it’s good information to use for particular situations.

The experiences that have facilitated our growth in this area the most would be our Child Development courses at CSU Chico. We all were required to take a course called Methods of Inquiry. This shaped all our growth on area of critical thinking because this class provided lots of hands on experience with empirical data. This allowed for us to further develop our skills to analyze, interpret, and evaluate that data. We were taught to research effectively, understand the rules of ethics, and assess situations adequately. Another class that facilitated our growth in this area was the Child Development Practicum course. We were placed in different age level classrooms as interns and we were able to expand our knowledge on critical thinking. It forced us to work outside our comfort zone because it was new experiences for all of us and we needed think about every decision we made because we were working in an environment with children instead of just learning about it. We agree that a lot of our assignments were what gave us the big boost of growth in this area. For example, Ruanto reflected on her final research proposal for the Methods of Inquiry class. She discussed being responsible for creating a research topic, developing the hypothesis, evaluating past research, and coming up with a method for that research. We agreed that participating in a project like that forces one to refine their skills and further develop those skills in order to be successful in an assignment like that. Another example of this was described by Mohammadian in her Child Development Supervised Curriculum course. She described it being hard for her and her partner to pick an implementation in the classroom because they had to make sure it was not similar to other people’s inquiries in the classroom. This caused her to have to use her critical thinking skills to come up with a good idea for her project and this required them to have to use research skills in order to find adequate information.

There were various parts that were struggles for us in the area of critical thinking. It has been hard for us to understand the results of different studies and being able to discussion interpretations of research. Critical thinking has its own language and it’s hard to understand that language, but once you do then the whole process of critical thinking becomes a lot easier. We also have found that it’s hard to spend the time in to find the best solutions or information. We think in critical thinking, one needs to take the time to find the best answer or approach but that can be difficult sometimes. It can also be difficult to evaluate the credibility of sources too, this helps to find adequate information.

We have found that a lot of achievements have come from being educated in this area. We have been able to become comfortable working in environments where critical thinking is required every day. Critical thinking has been able to come more naturally for us as we have become more exposed to it. This area has also helped us to be able to communicate effectively and clearly. Another accomplishment from this area is that we now have the basic knowledge to understand empirical data using our critical thinking skills. We have become more comfortable being handed data and other empirical information to analyze because we have developed the skills necessary to break it apart for understanding.

As Child Development Professionals, we are able to offer insight to the skills and abilities that go into critical thinking and understanding hard data. We can also offer up advice based on our own experiences inside the classroom with our critical thinking skills. We are able to serve as educational figures for those who are still trying to figure out what the skills necessary are and how to develop them. We want to be able to spread knowledge to create more educated Child Development Professionals out there interacting with children and families.