*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.*

Critical thinking is taking information and learned knowledge and applying it to everyday life. In child development I have learned about children’s well-being and I am able to apply the knowledge I have learned about and use it when I am working with children today. I have learned in my child development observation class how to properly observe children’s behavior in order to analyze their development and discover their needs. In my methods of inquiry class I learned about the importance of a healthy well-being and how a child’s well-being can be influenced by their environment and through play. In order to think critically it is important to first think of a question/questions then use learned skills to evaluate and support the findings. Once the findings are assessed, the next step is to organize them and make sense of the evidence in order to come up with a conclusion or conclusions.

I have used critical thinking many times at Mi Escuelita Maya when working with children. A few weeks ago I was working with a child who was distressed when his mother left the preschool. I asked myself, “Why is he upset”, I then observed his emotions and actions and tried to logically sort them. I figured that he missed his mom and was upset that she had left. I took him outside hoping that it would distract and calm him down. When going outside did not calm him down, I tried to ask him what he needed and wanted. I found out through communicating with him that he wanted peace, space, and quiet. I then came to the conclusion that what he needed based on the evidence and observation that I gathered was a place he could call his own. I found a tent in the dance studio and set it up on a rug in the main room of the preschool allowing him to go inside of it and have the peace that he wanted.

As an educator I am constantly observing and analyzing children’s behavior in order to think about their needs and wants. It is very important for children’s development that I am able to critically think about their behavior in order to provide them with those proper needs. I have learned about what children need in every class that I have taken at Chico State University.

The one class that has facilitated a large amount of my growth in the area of children’s well-being is in my methods of inquiry class. In this class I had to write a research paper about the importance of play on children’s well-being. Having a good well-being means that a child is in good standing mentally, physically and emotionally. With lots of research, reading, observing, and finding evidence I now know why a healthy well-being is essential to children’s development. My findings discovered that a well-being is the basis in developing a children’s talents and creative potential. “It can hinder or increase linguistic, mental, social, emotional, and motor skills that provide learning opportunities through knowledge and experience that will be required throughout their lifetime (Habibe, 2014).”

What I have struggled with in learning about children’s well-being is finding out what exactly is the most important factor that preschool/schooling provides in supporting this well-being besides safety, love, support, and basic needs? I have had to research and use critical thinking skills in order to find out that play is the most important factor. In my research I discovered, “Play not only promotes self-esteem and character building but it is essential to the growth and maturation of a child’s well-being. Habibe found that without adequate outdoor play time children lose the ability to build and cultivate friendship, think both critically and abstract, and foster creativity and independence (Habibe, 2014).”

Since I now know how important play is for children’s well-being, I have now achieved a good amount of success when helping cultivate children’s well-being. I changed the way I wrote lesson plans, and I changed my lesson plans themselves to make them more play based. I took the children outside more and allowed a significant amount of free play. Instead of facilitating games and play, I now let children be the leaders and instructors of their own play.

As an educator and child development professional I can now inform others of how important a healthy well-being is in children and how to obtain that well-being through play. I will also be able to use previous learned skills and knowledge about critical thinking in order to analyze children’s needs and wants properly and effectively.