Student Learning Outcome IV: Professionalism

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

*in professional contexts.*

My interpretation of this SLO is that we will use our knowledge of the responsibilities and expectations of the child care profession to reflect our behavior in the field. This can range in behavior to use among children in a preschool setting, adults in a home setting, or other professionals in an office setting. Experiences working with other families and professionals help shape our behavior to make sure it is appropriate for the various situations we may come across. Any misinterpretation in communication can lead to distrust or make a family or child feel they are not being respected. We also learn how to address other professionals in order to be able to work with them for the purpose of helping the family. Being a professional means being aware that they are representing a community of individuals and striving to use our knowledge to provide unbiased, high quality service to children and families.

Some of the skills that comprise the dispositions of a child care professional include having a calm temperament and respectful demeanor towards other families and professionals. Part of being a professional is knowing how to come across in your interactions, and our interactions will likely involve a variety of families and children who need us to work with them. Every family is different, but each and every one are deserving of our respect. Child care professionals should also be responsible and dedicated to assist the families under their care. The very purpose of this profession is to help improve the lives of children and families. Failing them due to lack of motivation or interest is unacceptable and can result in real consequences for that family. I consider each family that I work with as being my responsibility, and they give me the reason to never give up on their situation. Other skills needed as a child care professional include effective communication and listening skills, empathy, and an ability to produce unbiased observations for the benefit of the child. All of these skills are important in building trust with the families, conveying an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, and creating an open line of communication to the professional they can rely on.

Through education and real world experience in the field, I believe I have grown significantly in understanding how to be a child care professional. In the past, I would have a lot of difficulty identifying as a professional because working with children and families was not a job for me. I genuinely love working with children and had difficulty associating my work with them as being part of a professional job. As I learned more about this area of child development and gained more experience in myself, I understood that the skills and knowledge I use to work with children and families takes a lot of effort and professional application. Anyone can play with children, but not everyone can understand why a child behaves a certain way, the importance of a child being able to perform a particular activity, or what the signs are for a child in need. I have to give my skills and abilities more credit, and remind myself that professionals are a necessary part of a family’s success.

One thing I would like to improve on in this area is building a professional appearance, both in person and on paper. Part of being a professional is the way I present myself to others and convey that I can be entrusted to perform my job at a high standard. Sometimes, I feel that I come across as too young and inexperienced to other parents and professionals. Another part of being a professional is being able to take our education and experience to apply it in real situations. As I continue to develop as a child development student and as a child care professional, I want to be able to inspire confidence in others that I can do my job well. To do that, I will continue to develop my professional communication skills and take advantage of more opportunities to gain experience in the field.

As a life-long learner, I understand that I will never truly be an expert in the area of professionalism. There will always be new skills to learn and situations we will be unprepared for. By arming ourselves with ability to draw on past knowledge and experiences, we can learn to improvise in unexpected situations and be as prepared as we can be. Another thing I will continue to do as a life-long learner is make mistakes. Just as in the area of professionalism, there will always be much more to learn in the field of child development and I am bound to make mistakes along the way. By accepting the fact that I will make mistakes, I will be able to take risks when needed and learn from them to keep improving as a professional. I hope to someday become a professional that families can entrust the care of their child to, and other professionals will be pleased to work with to help other families

I think the best that I have achieved in this area is all of the progress I have made so far in understanding the importance of being a professional in both appearance and mentality. I have worked hard to build the confidence needed to present myself as a professional in the child development field, and to learn from the opportunities presented to me to develop my skills further. Having a professional mentality has also helped me to be calm in stressful situations and be aware of making any biased observations that do not benefit the child.

One assignment that documents my professional development in this area is an evaluation by my supervisor during my time as an intern in the Associated Students Child Development Lab at Chico State. In the evaluation, I was given feedback on my work and demeanor towards the children and other staff members. One of the strengths mentioned was my ability to cooperate and respect other members of staff, which helped create a positive environment and model for the children to follow. During my time in the preschool environment, I always tried to learn from the other staff members and worked hard to enhance my interactions with the children. I was pleased that my efforts were being noticed, and that I had improved during my time in the preschool environment.

Another assignment that documents my progress in professional development is my affiliation with Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity. We are an organization that promotes building leadership skills, forming fellowship bonds, and providing service to others. We also provide members with various workshops on leadership skills, which support several skills related to professionalism. For the past two years, I have served as a member of the Executive Board and learned to maintain a professional appearance to deal with certain situations. Through my membership in this organization, I have learned to apply the skills I learned about professionalism beyond child care settings, and it has prepared me for future leadership roles in which such skills will be an important part of my work.