Leadership Training Written Assignment 3: Protective Factors

Reflections on your Supervised Practicum

Name of CHLD 392 Classroom: Montana State – Child Development Center

The handouts that were given by the guest presenter were very informative and helpful. The main handout that was the most crucial was the Protective Factors paper. The Protective Factors paper states that social connections, social and emotional competence of children, concrete support in times of need, parental resilience, and knowledge of parenting and child development are the five factors that make a family strong. If a family can achieve these five factors, children will have optimal development and there will be less abuse and neglect.

When working at preschools on campus or off campus it is important to identify if these factors are a part of a program. For some programs these five factors are easy to identify, and for some classrooms these may be hard to find or some of the factors may not exist. When I worked at CDC at Montana State University, I was able to identify these factors in the classroom.

The first factor that I was able to identify was that there was a social connection between families, staff, and teachers. The teachers are very connected to each family and have a relationship not only with the child but with the child’s caregivers. The teachers offer emotion support, help parents solve problems, provide opportunities for communication, and reduce feelings of isolation by welcoming each parent that walks in the door and having a conversation with them about their child/children. Fostering secure, healthy, positive relationships with parents in turn helps the child’s social and emotional competence.

The CDC displayed factors of children’s social and emotional competence by first setting clear behavior guidelines and rules. Teachers use positive language to redirect, or reinforce positive behavior for children who are struggling with listening. If a child is having a very difficult time listening they tell children to go into the ‘resting teepee’ the ‘resting teepee’ is a place where a child can sit alone and without distraction or noise so that they can practice self –regulating behaviors.

Teachers use proper communication skills and wording when interacting with the children so that they set a good example of how the children can effectively communicate their needs and emotions with others.

The classroom environment was warm, inviting, and supported children’s need for consistency through routine, play and creative lesson plans. The CDC had a calm and enriching atmosphere with areas that supported dramatic play, large muscle movement, fine motor movement, sensory play, and quiet areas for resting. Other areas in the classroom supported language and literacy, art, music, reading, mathematics, and science. There was a set schedule each day that consisted of open table activities, small group circle times, nutrition breaks, bathroom breaks, rest time, physical education time, and outdoor play time. These factors are important to have in a classroom because children need specific influences in order to be healthy socially and emotionally.

Children are not the only ones however that need a healthy social and emotional competence. Parents need concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and resilience. Families in the CDC were given paperwork, flyers, and other reading material informing them about various resources offered by the community and the school that not only offered various medical services, legal service support, and nutrition assistance, but also informed them about parenting classes, family activities and family events. These parenting classes and family events were useful because they help parents strengthen their knowledge of parenting skills and development. Throughout each month there were various parenting classes held nearby in the community that were of little cost or were free. These classes taught parents about positive discipline techniques, secure attachments, interactive language, predictable/consistent routines, and physical and emotion support for children.

When parents are informed, supported, and educated it is much easier to create resilience in families. The CDC teachers have a positive and helpful attitude no matter what the circumstances are regarding the connection between parent and teacher. At the beginning of the semester parents fill out a detailed form that asks them all about the child and the family. Questions on the form help inform teachers of home life situations, family stressors, financial matters, nutrition and medical information as well as feelings parents have about anything they wish to talk about involving their family or child. This makes it easier for the teachers to evaluate the situation at hand and make necessary changes so that families feel supported. The teachers also hold meetings with the parents to discuss the child/children’s needs, and also to discuss any concerns the parents are having. This gives parents an opportunity to tell us about challenges they are facing, and adversity they are dealing with.

When families feel support it is easier for them to have a positive attitude about life and it can help a parent manage their feelings more effectively. Communication and the ability to seek help when needed are also big factors for creating parental resilience.

To strengthen these three factors of, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and resilience, I would make some changes to the CDC in order to further support these factors.

The first change I would make would to hold a free parenting class once a month in the CDC, taught by either teachers at center, or professors on campus. This would help inform parents of parenting skills and knowledge of child development from a personal and close connection.

The next change I would make would be to set a schedule in which parents volunteered in the classroom once or twice a month so that there was more parent involvement. When parents are involved in their children’s education it offers parents support, and a sense of community and it offers children concrete support and helps improve their social and emotional competence.

Lastly I would create a welcoming party at the beginning of the semester so that each parent was introduced with each other. I would then encourage every parent to exchange numbers and get together at least once a month so that each parent felt supported through social connection.

### I think social connection is one of the most important protective factors. I found an idea online that has great potential in strengthening families. It is called Parent Support Groups, and it offers parents support for those that have autistic children, children with diabetes, children with sensory processing issues or parents who are post-adoption, or single. This is valuable to have in the classroom because have these support groups so parents can share their experiences, bond, share their feelings and form a bond with other parents. http://parentsplaceonline.org/find-help/connect/parents-support-groups/