

### ***SLO 3 Developmental Context***

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of the multiple environmental contexts in which children grow and develop, and will be able to analyze systems that support children's well-being.*

A student who is educated in the discipline of Child Development understands that there are many factors that contribute to the success of a child's growth and development. One of those important factors is the child's surrounding environment, their support system, and the interaction between the two. A unique aspect of the Child Development field is just how applied the curriculum is. Students not only learn theories, like that of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, but they also have several experiences to apply such concepts in practical ways at various internships.

I learned more about the value of the environmental factors in a child's developing life in my internships than anywhere else. Through my direct observations in the classroom and constructive feedback from teachers, I learned about how children need constant change of the physical environment in order to assist in new learning. I learned that as a childcare professional, it is crucial to be positioned in a way that the entire classroom is supervised, all the while you are presented in an approachable and available manner for children that are in need of help or attention. Additionally, I learned that it is the quality of the role models in children's early lives that determine their optimal learning environment. These support systems help form a child's well-being through

scaffolding appropriate behavior, strengthening social attachments, and teaching about the societal and cultural norms by which the world exists.

My first experience I had that facilitated my growth in understanding children's developmental context was in my Observational Techniques course. Through the observations of the Associated Students Child Development Lab (ASCDL) I was first exposed to multi-faceted systems of the physical environment. I learned about teacher positioning and making a variety of resources available to the children throughout a classroom setting. Then in my three supervised internships I applied such concepts in practice. I was constantly aware of my own positioning and modeling as a teacher, and helped rearrange the physical environment to provide new stimuli for the developing children. Through these internships I also witnessed the differences in modeling between teachers, family members, and peers. Each relationship is so important to a child's growth and well-being, therefore it was the collaborative efforts of everyone that provided the optimal learning environment for the children.

Of all the things I learned in this area, the thing that fascinates me the most is just how complicated a child's development really is. Before learning Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, I had no idea the magnitude of the factors that contribute to a child's growth. Continually, of this theory, the thing that interested me most was the value the interactions between systems had on the child's development. I like this theory most because I feel the whole child is much more complicated than anybody realizes; therefore seeing development

through such in-depth theories helps me understand the complexity that makes up child development. For example, in my supervised practicum internship I had noticed a pattern of many new behavioral issues with my target child that I hadn't seen before. She was often fighting with her best friend, acting out against instruction, and in a bad mood on a consistent basis. This wasn't her usual temperament or demeanor, and so I encountered the preschool's head teacher with my concern. I then found out that her mother was pregnant with another child and this was going to be her first sibling. She already had felt attention being taken away from her because of her sibling-to-be. So, the teacher said she was expressing her anger and frustration of the uncontrollable situation with her peers and friends. Now that I understood the situation that was impacting her behavior, I could better ensure that her needs would be met.

One thing that I have been curious to learn more about is the impact that contrasting influences have on a child's development. Through my experiences working with children and families, I have seen conflicting values being taught at school/daycare as compared to at the child's home environment. When this happens it must be confusing for the child to determine which is considered right versus wrong. I would be curious to know the possible negative and positive effects this contradiction has on a child's growth and development.

My understanding of developmental contexts will guide my professional practice in any profession I choose for my future career. Whether I choose to be a director of a new student leadership program on college campuses or a head

teacher at a non-profit or daycare, I feel understanding the complexity of the environmental factors that contribute to children's development can only help in providing an optimal learning environment. On a college campus, every interaction and stimulus is new, therefore I understand that such a leadership experience will have to be formed in a way that recognizes the variety of backgrounds and perspectives each student will bring to the table. On the flip side, in a non-profit or daycare setting it is crucial to understand the importance that the many influences and their interactions have on a child's well-being. I can bring this level of understanding and knowledge to any field working with children and families.

I will continue to grow my understanding of developmental contexts by continually analyzing the various different systems that have an impact on children's well-being. Because at this point in my professional career I still have a very limited work-experience, I have yet to be exposed to endless familial structures and backgrounds. It is through the individual children and families that I will work with in the future that will determine my understanding of developmental contexts. As long as I am open and receptive to the individual's needs, this will help me learn more in a practical way.

The first assignment that demonstrates my understanding and knowledge of this student learning objective is in my Marriage and Family Relations class. The assignment was a personal "birth interview," by which I had to interview my parents discussing my pregnancy and birthing process. This was a surprisingly

fascinating assignment because I found out so much about my own experience coming into this world. Among other things, this assignment taught me most about the in-vitro process and the numerous struggles and benefits of going through this process. I learned that my twin sister and I were not only wanted very much, but we were immensely expensive as well. This showed me how financial issues contribute to the success of a child's development and that some fertility practices are unavailable to some families due to the high expense. I also learned that there was an assortment of factors that had longing impacts on myself now as an adult, ranging from my temperament all the way to my mannerisms and tendencies that are still prevalent in my adult life.

The second assignment was the Individual Case Study summary that was written in my Observational Techniques class. We were given a "target child" to observe over the course of the semester. This incorporated noting her behavioral and social tendencies and utilized checklists to gauge her physical development. At the end of the semester we had to produce an Individual Case Study Summary for the child. This included her family background, individual qualities, developmental status, and advice to future caregivers of the child in order to best assist her growth and development. In the advice section I identified the child's developmental needs and offered ways by which the environmental factors could be adapted to help in her developmental progression.

