Student Learning Objective 2: Child and Environmental Assessment and Study

Students will demonstrate knowledge of assessment issues and perform qualitative and quantitative assessments of children and their environments.

Assessment allows for the quality of the classroom (program and/or environment) and/or individuals (staff, administrators, teachers and children) to be evaluated. Assessments can provide qualitative data or quantitative data in an unbiased view. Assessment data is used to improve the quality of the classroom and determine where a child is developmentally. Assessments allow staff to develop ways to support the child's development. If children's assessments show they are not developmentally where they should be interventions can be developed.

When I was a freshman at Chico State I honestly couldn't tell you what assessment was. If you asked me to explain assessment I would have simply said a test (multiple choice, matching, true/false or essay format). After my classes at Chico State I have a deeper understanding of what assessment is. Although it can occur in those formats, there are many other types of assessments as well. Assessments can be administered through measures such as self-reports, interviews and observations. I have also grown in this area because I have conducted assessments first-hand! In my supervised practicum class I completed the Desired Results for Children and Families (DRDP form) on a target child and in my assessment class I completed a preschool observation using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

Assessment and research can be difficult to differentiate. Assessment and research both use the same scientific method for data collection, analyses and interpretations, but the goals and uses are different. Assessment is used to create improvements to an individual or specific population. I conducted an assessment on a target child in the infant room to see where she was developmentally. Then I provided feedback and suggestions that would support her developmentally based on my observations. Research is used to gain knowledge about a larger population. For example in my research methods class I picked a topic of interest and read through various scholarly articles and past research. Then I designed a research study that could be conducted in multiple elementary schools and the results may be applicable to the larger population. Assessments do not provide information about a larger population like research can. The intended audiences of each are different also. Although both use similar measures and can provide qualitative and quantitative data, it is important to consider whether the data is being used to make improvements to a specific individual or population or if it's providing knowledge about a greater population.

The most important thing about assessment is to use it to make improvements in the environment or for individuals. If a child is struggling in an area of development it is important to design an intervention for that child. It's also necessary to assess after an intervention has begun to see if that invention is working and if it's not alter the intervention plan! As child development professionals we want what is best for children! Using assessments allows us to see if our program is working for the children or if it needs to be altered in order to get better results.

An area of assessment I have struggled to understand is reliability and validity. I understand that reliability can exist without validity, but I've struggled to establish a deeper

meaning of these terms. I have also struggled with remembering the different types of reliability and validity used in assessment. I believe with more practice on these concepts I would understand it better.

I believe the best way to expand my knowledge in the area of assessment is by experience! Assessments can seem confusing and be difficult to conduct at first, but with practice they become easier and make more sense. I also want to become familiar with more types of assessments used in the field because I only am familiar with the ones I've used and discussed in my courses. To do this I will research types of assessments that are used in the field.

Two assignments that have supported my understanding of assessment and research are completing the Desired Results for Children and Families form on a target child and completing a classroom assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System.

In my supervised practicum class, I completed the Desired Results for Children and Families (DRDP form) on a target child. I worked with this child all semester long and tracked her progress through observation notes. Then I rated her development based on those observation notes. After completing the DRDP I wrote up a narrative description of the form that a parent or guardian would be able to easily understand. In the narrative I included suggestions for the parent that would support the child's development at home. I also included suggestions for the staff that could support child in the classroom.

In my assessment class, I observed the preschool room in the Associated Students Child Development Laboratory at California State University, Chico. I worked with a colleague on two different days to assess the classroom environment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). We each completed our own observations at the same times/days and

compared our results to see how similar our ratings were. This activity was beneficial to see how my observations compared to another child development student and to see if we were judging the room similarly.