

### **SLO 1: Foundations of Child Development**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical foundations of the discipline.

**Narrative Purpose:** This student learning objective examines all of the theories and research done within child development and how these provide us with a foundation for the children's development and developmental context that we continue to build onto in order to teach children in a developmentally appropriate manner.

I have grown in my understanding in this area by taking child development classes each semester and growing from each one of them. I feel like each class I took built on top of the other and through this we would expand more on the theories and topics. This happened from learning about it in the classroom such as my introduction to child development class to observing children from a one way mirror in my observational techniques course, and then actually going and interning in preschool classrooms. By interning within the preschool classrooms, I was able to apply my knowledge that I was taught within the classroom at Chico State and use it within the preschool classrooms. For instance, I used the theories to help me understand how children learn developmentally and what they can or cannot do at certain stages in their development. I was able to see more first hand of how to handle conflict resolution situations with children within the preschool classrooms as well that I learned from the teachers in the classroom and within my coursework. I also took a psychology class that focused on the learning in the young child through the theorist Jean Piaget. Through this course, we observed children of all ages playing on the playground and wrote a paper describing their different developmental stages as well as gender roles.

When I first started Child Development, I had very little experience with children and had very little understanding of the different developmental stages that children went through.

As I took more and more classes in Child Development, I found it interesting that around certain ages, children will begin to understand more and be able to perform different abilities in each of the four domains. For instance, in my Introduction to Child Development class, we went over all of the different theories such as Piaget, Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky and many others and the basics of how children grow from the sensorimotor stage to the pre-operational stage to the concrete operational stage and then to the formal operational stage. This was part of Piaget's theory and provided me with a base of what to expect from children's cognitive abilities at certain ages. I also believe that having an understanding of Bronfenbrenner's theory is something really good to know. How a child's environment and those who are in his or her life will either work for or against a child and have a big influence of who they are as an individual. This can be very helpful when working with a child because it can explain a lot about the child and can provide you with information of how to handle the child in certain situations. It can also give you a better understanding of how to work with the child's family. For instance, learning about a child's microsystem within a parent teacher conference that I had the opportunity to attend, helped me to better understand the child. His father was away at war and his mother was balancing school, work, and taking care of her two boys. This put a lot of stress in the home and made sense as to why the child acted out more within the classroom. Another concept that I really liked was Vygotsky's scaffolding. This allows the child to become more independent and helps them develop skills slowly on their own through zone proximal development. Before taking Child Development classes, I had no idea who these theorists were and had a hard time remembering who was who and who did what. I feel like now that I am almost done with the major, I have a better concept as to who they are and what their importance to the child development world was and still is.

By observing children and family behavior, it gave me real life experiences and different perspectives on how to work with all types of children. When I did my Observation Technique class, it gave me the chance to see the big picture of what children do when the teacher isn't watching and how teachers react to certain situations between children. For instance, you may see children doing what they shouldn't be doing once the teacher turns around such as taking toys from other children or saying mean comments to the other children. By the time the teacher knows what has happened, she has already missed the action and then has to investigate the situation by asking questioning in order to understand how to fix the problem. As time went on, I was given the opportunity to work in a few preschools and I was allowed to observe the different techniques from the two teachers such as how they handled conflict resolution and their classroom management skills. This gave me confidence in handling situations on my own through the observations of other teachers and how they handled the situations. When a child is having an argument with another child, I am able to scaffold the situation by asking questions of what happened and how we can solve the problem. Through observing the teachers, it taught me what to do and learn from what worked for them to help me with similar situations in the future. This also showed me the importance of attachment and how to help the child transition between drop-off and pick up with the parent or caregiver. Before I did not realize how important attachment was, however after taking classes and seeing it firsthand, it made me realize that even at a young age children build attachments and that their primary attachments are typically their parents or caregiver.

Bandura's social cognitive theory will guide my practice in the future because I realized that through his concept children are always watching the adults around them and will imitate what they do. The adults have to remember that they need to model the behavior that they

expect from their students as they will imitate your actions more than what you tell them to do. You may tell a child what they should do, but in order for them to perform this specific action, you must become a positive role model and show the child that you as well abide to what you are teaching them. Children learn more from what they see. Another guide that I will follow in the future would be Vygotsky. I really like his idea of scaffolding and to teach the child how to do things for themselves. This will help the child build their self-esteem and become more independent. A way that I have used this theory is by helping a child tie his shoes. After showing the child how to do it, I had the child make the knot and then hold one of the loops while I looped the other string around and tied it. After that I had the child tie his shoe while watching me tie my shoe so he still had a visual yet he was doing it on his own. I did this until he no longer needed my assistance. Lastly, I really liked Piaget's concept of the four stages of development. I think that it is very important to know them so you know what is developmentally appropriate for the child and what they are capable of how they think, see their worlds, and solve problems.

I would like to continue to grow by continuing to stay updated with the latest research and continuing to apply what I have learned through my classes in Child Development with the children who I will be working with in the future.

### **Assignments**

In my Introduction to Child Development class, we had to write a research paper. I wrote mine about why play was important in children's lives and how it is an important aspect for a child developmentally. I focused a lot on why children learn from play cognitively and gain more social skills through doing this. I described how children learn to cooperate with one another and how to resolve conflicts between themselves and other children. I also described

how through play children are able to progress in their gross and fine motor skills. Through play, children are able to use their imaginations and perform roles in pretend play of their choice. This documents my progress by showing that I was understanding one of the theorist, Jean Piaget, and how play is very effective in a child's development. The only downfall to this assignment is that I didn't observe this information, but received this information from class material and through scholarly journals. I think I grasped the concept however I had no real firsthand experience to see how much children grow through play by being in a classroom or observing them in a park.

In my second paper that I wrote in my Learning in the Young Child class, I expanded my idea of children's play to gender roles and their differences. In this class, we focused a lot on Jean Piaget and his view on cognitive development with the topics of gender identity, gender schema, gender stereotypes, and gender roles. I had to go to a park and observe children playing on the playground and put what I was learning through this class to a real life experience of the two genders. In this paper, I was able to see firsthand how there were not a lot of gender mixed groups and that boys were often playing with other boys and girls playing with other girls. In my paper, I described that typically boys were seen doing rough play while some of the girls sat in the shade and talked with one another. I also observed that children will observe and imitate other males and females depending on the gender that they identify with. This falls under the Bandura theory where children will imitate peers and people who are older than them. Children will observe the gender they identify with and will begin to dress as they do and act as they would. Overall through this assignment I was able to expand on my knowledge of child development and apply it to a group of children who were playing in

a park. Through this I was able to analyze what I saw from a park setting and apply my knowledge to children's social roles and their cognitive development on gender roles.