As stated in California State University, Chico’s Student Learning Objective 1 regarding foundations of child development, I, Melissa June Norton, possess an understanding of the theoretical, empirical and philosophical foundations of the discipline of Child Development and am able to apply this knowledge while working with children, families and fellow professionals. I have grown in my time spent at Chico State in a number of ways through coursework, group collaboration and internships.

I am skilled in observation techniques and in reporting professionally on individual students, teachers and classroom environments. I can construct sociograms, write case studies and anecdotal records and utilize other charts and tables (IE: Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Desired Results Developmental Profile) which document my observations and children’s learning. I can create thorough behavior analysis reports on individual students when necessary and modify my interactions as well as the environment in order to develop more desirable behavior in the children that I am working with.

I am able to proficiently and meticulously respond to articles and readings which have been assigned and comprehensively research empirical data relating to child development and teaching strategies. Through group and partner collaboration, I have learned to actively listen to the points of views of others and to stand up for what I believe the theoretical, philosophical foundations and implications of the discipline mean to Child Development students and teachers. I enjoy engaging in self-reflection and know that it is a valid way to measure my strengths and challenges in any situation or setting.

Throughout my internships in Child Development courses 282 Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum for Children, 392 Child Development Practicum and 492 Family and Child Internship , I have not only gained valuable experience in the field, but in two out of three cases, have been offered employment after my internship hours were fulfilled. I have worked in child development lab settings, private daycare facilities, state-funded preschools and in Chico State’s Associated Students Child Development Lab office under the supervision of the director and co-director. I enjoyed all of these occasions equally and completely.

My first and foremost thought about all that I have learned in the course of my college career is how crucial it is for teachers to nurture the development of the child as a whole. So many people still probably view teaching as primarily academic, while child development majors know that the child grows socially, physically, creatively, spiritually, emotionally *and* intellectually as a result of attending school.

I feel I have learned the most about children and the way that they learn from the teachings of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget, founder of the field of cognitive development, told us about the Sensorimotor Period (0-2 years), the Pre-Operational (2-7 years), Concrete Operational (7-11 years) and Formal Operational (11 and older) Stages and that each child is an active, self-motivated agent who plays a role in their own development. He emphasized the importance of play as a learning opportunity. It was Piaget who said, “Nothing exists unless it is directly perceived,” and that “Play is the purest form of assimilation,” which is, of course, taking in and processing new information.

Lev Vygotsky agreed that young children construct their own knowledge in building a base of information from prior experiences and that play is how children learn and practice life skills. Vygotsky believed that learning can be advanced with the assistance of an expert (IE: scaffolding and ZPD) and that language was essential for growth. The importance of culture’s influence on cognitive development was also taught to us by Vygotsky, while Piaget’s stages were thought to apply to children all over the world.

I have appreciated these theories on learning as well as all of the others that I have had the opportunity to come to understand and use in my work with children of all ages. I feel the best of what I have achieved is yet to come and am thrilled to be graduating in December of this year so that I can obtain and sustain a career in helping families and children. As a lifelong learner, I know I will continue to use the skills I have acquired at Chico State and will always miss being a student.