As stated by California State University, Chico’s Student Learning Objective number four regarding professionalism, I, Melissa June Norton, understand professionalism by demonstrating knowledge, attitudes and skills of those individuals who are committed to understanding and working with children and families. In addition, I have mastered communication (reading, writing, listening, computer and speaking skills), leadership, research, assessment and evaluation and collaboration skills.

My first response to what I have learned about professionalism since I began my higher education experience is that this is one area where I will always be growing. There are all kinds of professionals who deal with children and families and all kinds of personalities and backgrounds that go with them. It will always be somewhat challenging to work with others in my capacity as an early childhood educator, but conflicts are an inevitable part of every professional’s life, especially those in the field of human services. Learning how to handle conflict professionally and in ways which bring about growth and change is both significant and necessary.

I have grown in my understanding of this area through my various child development internship experiences and my prior work experiences in the field of early childhood education. I once worked as a health aide for a preschool which served severely handicapped children. Once of these children was autistic and never sat down, but tiptoed around the classroom for 3.5 hours every day. The teacher decided to try to get him to sit for 5 minutes at a time during circle time in the morning. As a new aide, I was not comfortable holding him in my lap while he screamed, kicked, pushed and tried to get up, but I realized that the teacher did have his best interests at heart as sitting still is a part of going to school and a part of life sometimes. I did my best to try to keep him there for as long as I could while telling him that he was safe and trying to engage him in the circle time songs, stories and activities. I still sometimes wonder what the other children were thinking and what the neighboring classrooms thought about all that racket every morning. I have not returned to work in a setting for severely handicapped children, though I now feel that I know more teaching strategies for children with special needs.

One thing I have learned the most about is that you cannot please everyone. I am a sensitive person and usually view it as a strength and a desirable character trait, however, there are times when I have had a conflict or received criticism and my feelings were hurt. As someone who has been in the field for 7 years now and as a remarkable parent, I put forth energy every single day to be friendly, positive, enthusiastic and productive at school, work and home. When my efforts are not recognized or others treat me less than respectfully, I take it to heart and often lose sleep and time wondering if it was something that I did to evoke this kind of response. The more experience that I gain working with others, the better able I am to take things less harshly and realize that no matter how hard I am trying, I am not going to be able to please everyone. It has been empowering to become aware that some people have other business that they are not taking care of constructively, so it is taken out through their interactions with others around them. This may have nothing to do with me, it just is what it is. While I would rather that all people like and regard me in a positive light, I know that this is an unattainable goal and that I can only do my best every day.

Being a life-long learner, I will continue to use my observation skills to collect data on human interactions and reactions and adjust my behavior accordingly. I will strive to consistently put my best foot forward and take care to treat others how I want to be treated. I will use what I have learned about others in my own life and work and be open to modifying my existing knowledge with new knowledge in all areas. I will keep at the forefront of my mind that people come from all different kinds of backgrounds and families and how they perceive me may have nothing to do with how I behave toward them.