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CHLD-392

12/5/11

Family Conference Assignment Write-Up

I went and observed a family conference on 12/2/11, in the Child Development Laboratory in the Modoc building, room 131, at 11:00 a.m. I participated from 11:00 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. in the morning. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a specific child, in my case it was Lizzie. Also, the purpose was to communicate different thoughts about Lizzie and to have the parent ask questions about how they are doing at school and what they can do in the home to strengthen school skills. It was to discuss strengths, likes, and dislikes at school and relationships with other children. The items/concepts discussed were that Lizzie is a very nice asset to the classroom, Cate has a very strong relationship with Lizzie and really interacts with her in the afternoon when there isn't as many children around, Lizzie doesn't have a close relationship with any of the children, just goes to children they are doing the same things she is interested in.

For example, Cate mentioned that when Izabel and Malyha are doing puzzles, Lizzie will usually join in, Lizzie was asked if Juliette would be her friend, and Lizzie said "Yes," Lizzie doesn't write any letters or really do any drawings, she can pick her name out though on the wall as well as Janith's name, Lizzie brings lots of things home to show her mom, Lizzie usually is always hungry at school, so sometimes she doesn't eat dinner at home, Cate talked about the fact they are lucky to be able to give the children so many meals, Lizzie talks many times about her family, and especially her cousins. Lizzie just moved in with her dad now into a new apartment, but hasn't shown any change in

behavior, constantly is talking about her cousins and the new apartment, and Lizzie's mom was asking about how she tries to get Lizzie to speak Spanish at school, but she doesn't. Cate said she usually tries to say a few words in Spanish to Lizzie, but Lizzie usually pretends to not understand. She really does know, but prefers to speak English at school. In order to make Lizzie's mom feel comfortable, there was banana bread, oranges, and water available, even though Lizzie's mom didn't take anything. Most of the conversation was held by the teacher instead of the parent. I would estimate about 75% of the conversation was by the teacher and about the other 25% of the conversation was held by the parent. I learned that Lizzie can speak Spanish and that she likes to hang around Rosalind, Janith, Izabel, and Malyha. I learned that Lizzie can recognize her name, but not write letters. I learned that Lizzie has cousins and that she and her mom just moved into a new apartment with her dad. I learned that she does take lots of art work home to show her mom. I learned that she doesn't have a tight friendships, just drifts around the room looking for something that interests her.

The centers and teachers can help Lizzie to find a really close friend and to have ideas in the morning of what she would like to do. The teachers can help her by trying to get her to speak Spanish in the classroom for the teachers who know how to speak Spanish. Teachers and the center can work with Lizzie to help her recognize letters and start writing letters on paper. Teachers can help facilitate her learning by giving her different tasks to engage in. The teachers can learn to engage with Lizzie more and engage her to make friends with other children. Teachers can encourage Lizzie to teach other children skills they might not know how to do, but that she really enjoys doing.

I learned that family conferences are basically just going over how the child is

doing in school and what can be improved on. I learned that it is making the connection between school and home. I also learned that parents can share personal things that they do at home with their children that can help teachers understand the child's behavior. I learned that teachers fill out a form that has physical growth, cognitive skills, physical education skills, math skills, language skills, and communication skills. In preparation, they fill this out on the child and then give a copy to the parent or parents to look at and use as a reference to ask questions. Other than that, not much preparation involved.

The communication skills were really great. Both parent and teacher were very open about sharing things together about Lizzie. Cate was open to tell her mother what was going on at school and how she really was a great child to have in the classroom. Cate also said that she just really likes to hang out with certain children and do certain activities. The mom was very open about what she does with Lizzie at home and how that translates to school. Lizzie's mom discussed that she always brings artwork home and then wants her mom to frame it for her. The emotional tenor of the conference was very relaxed. Both Cate and Lizzie's mom were very much interested in knowing about Lizzie. They were both open to questions and how Lizzie is doing at school and home. It was a very laid-back discussion with lots of information discussed about Lizzie. I really enjoyed observing.

If I was the teacher, I would have not changed anything. I really liked how the conference went and how easy communication and questions flowed from both Cate and Lizzie's mom. If I had been the family, I would not have changed anything either. I thought things went smoothly and Cate was able to answer all questions that she was asked. All the things Cate said about Lizzie were positive and that Lizzie was a really

great child to have in the program. I think that the mother was very comfortable talking about Lizzie and was very happy with her progress and how well Lizzie was doing. I would rate myself on performing a family conference at a 3-very confident. I think it would be very easy to perform this conference as a teacher. I would be comfortable describing a child and talking to the parent about connections between school and home. It would just help me to have everything written down that I wanted to discuss so I wouldn't forget anything. I have the strength to talk about children and how they are doing in the classroom. I would be comfortable giving my observations of the child and then asking the family or parent if they had any questions. I would be comfortable asking parents what I could do to help in the classroom with this child and give parents ideas that they can use at home with their child. I would just be comfortable discussing how a child is doing in my classroom. Some challenges would be maybe forgetting things or stumbling over words because I do get nervous, but that would be it. I am really confident that I would do well.

I think one thing from the article, *Partnerships with Learning: Conferencing with Families*, by Holly Seplocha that I thought was well done was not using jargon or loaded words that parents or families can't understand. Cate used language that was appropriate and was understandable to the parent. She didn't use confusing words or big words, she just used language that was easily understandable. I think that is so important to remember. If parents or families don't understand words, then they don't know how to help their child properly. Cate used words that were easily understood that conveyed meaning about Lizzie's abilities. I learned several things about teacher-family relationships in programs for young children. I learned that teacher-family relationships are so

important to have because you need to be able to discuss your concerns or needs with teachers about your child. If you aren't comfortable with the teachers, then you feel isolated and are less open at conference time. In order for teachers to help children, they need to be in contact and have relationships with parents so they know how to assist the child. Without relationships with the teachers, you really don't know how your child is doing in the classroom and don't know what to reinforce at home with your child. That can be really hard to deal with when you don't know where your child is at. In order to help your child to grow, it is important to talk to teachers, otherwise you are just teaching the child things at home that have no relevance for the child outside of the home. It is important to be respectful to teachers and important to ask questions about how the child is doing in school. You are doing a child a disservice if you are not in relationships with teachers. It is a crucial relationship that needs to be had in order for children to perform well at school and make the connection to home.