Foundations of Child Development

*Student Learning Objective 1:*

*Students will have an understanding of the theoretical, empirical, and philosophical foundations of the discipline. In addition, students will be able to apply their knowledge while working with children, families, and fellow professionals.*

From the beginning of my coursework in child development, I have learned about basic theories and philosophical foundations. I learned about Freud’s psychosexual theory, Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory, as well as behavioral theories from John Watson, Ivan Pavlov, and B. F. Skinner. I took exams, wrote papers, and memorized terms. However, these things did not impact my learning in as profound a way as hands-on experience with children. I believe that the direct observations and interactions with children have given me tangible knowledge that will be very beneficial as I continue on my career path to work with children.

I have noticed a great amount of personal growth from my start in child development until now. In the beginning, I didn’t realize just how much I had yet to learn about children. I had little experience working with children, as well little confidence in my abilities. Now, I can say that I feel confident and capable in my skills and knowledge. I have also opened my mind to more possibilities and have become a critical thinker. For example, instead of jumping to a conclusion about a child who is “misbehaving”, I ponder the possible underlying reasons for that behavior. Children’s behavior is often a message to us that they don’t know how to verbally convey. I have learned that as professionals working with children, we are responsible for giving patience, support, and an outlet for children to express their feelings and thoughts. I know that you can’t make assumptions about children’s behavior based on the “norms”.

One of the aspects that I have most enjoyed learning about is the developmental processes of children. I love seeing how they move from on stage to the next, sometimes in fragments and other times with complete fluidity. Children fascinate me and bring me joy. I am thankful to be a part of their development and their lives, even if in a small way.

As a member of the child development profession, I feel that I can offer my knowledge as well as my passion for this field of work. I think it is important to be passionate, and to remember that every one of my actions may have an impact on children. I know that I am an example, a leader, a team worker, an advocate, and more for the children with whom I come in contact. I have learned about child psychology, physical development, social and emotional needs, education, professionalism, assessment, child care licensing and regulations, and more. Through all of this, I definitely feel that the basic foundations of child development have been vital to my learning and success. I don’t think that I would be an effective teacher without the classes, internships, and colleagueship that I have experienced at Chico State. I feel that my child development courses have effectively met the objective in helping students to understand theoretical, empirical, and philosophical foundations of the discipline.

Specific courses have been very influential in my learning and growth. For example, one of my first courses at Chico State was *Observational Techniques*. In this course, I completed an individual case study (see attachment) for a child that I observed in a preschool classroom. This assignment provided the opportunity to practice objective observations and reporting. In my *Child Development Practicum* course, I completed an internship in a toddler classroom. During my internship, I developed an inquiry project (see attachment) about toddlers’ development and documented findings within the classroom. Another course that applied to my knowledge in this area was *Methods of Inquiry in Child Development*. In this course, wrote a research paper (see attachment) on the topic of childhood attachment types. This paper provided practice with research as well as theoretical foundations of child development. These courses were a wonderful resource for me during my formal education.