*Student Learning Objective: Professionalism*

*Students will understand professionalism by demonstrating knowledge, attitudes, and skills of those individuals who are committed to understanding and working with children and families. Communication (reading, writing, listening, computer and speaking skills), leadership, research, assessment and evaluation, and collaboration skills are mastered.*

The first thing that pops into my head after reading this student learning objective is working in small groups. Small groups have been a huge part of my experience through college, but has been an even bigger part of my upper division class work. I am personally not a big fan of working in groups, and I think most people feel the same, because there is always a person who doesn’t do their work, someone who doesn’t show up, and someone who takes charge. However in reality working in small groups and through those problems really teach you the real life skills being discussed and help mimic those situations. Now reflecting on my small group experiences they really helped strengthen, and at points stretched my communication skills. Communication is at the core of working with any group of people, and is a very important skill. I have also learned leadership, because someone needs to take charge and lead in a way that is appropriate and helpful without being harmful. Working in small groups has helped me to shape the foundation of my professionalism skills.

Besides working in small groups in classes participating at program sites around Chico for classes, my practicum experience in the toddler classroom on Chico State Campus, and my internship experience, at Parent Infant Programs, has helped grow my understanding of professionalism in several ways. Working at a state funded preschool in Chico, was one of my first experiences working with children in a care setting. This experience introduced to me to the process of acquiring an internship and how to talk to professionals about setting up time to meet with them, and possibly volunteer at their site, as well as learning how to navigate through a relationship with a head teacher, and an assistance teacher. During my practicum experience I worked in a toddler classroom on the California State University Chico campus. There I learned how to collaborate with colleagues. We spent an hour a week collaborating ideas, and coming up with learning outcomes for the children. During my time with the children I learned how to use my colleagues as a resource for help and for knowledge and how to use each other strengths and weakness when working with the children. My leadership grew a ton working with the toddlers and I really worked on me learning how to take the initiative. When working with toddlers adults need to demonstrate how things are done, and when working in a toddler classroom the adults have to step up and start activities, help children do activities, and cannot wait for someone to tell them to do it.

All these experiences have helped lay the foundation for me to take on my internship experience; which was a big step into the professional world. Having to go out on your own without a teacher laying out any real rules was a new experience that helped me grow my professionalism. I made appointments with four different places, sent out my resume, and filled out applications for the first time. It took me already having firm skills in reading, writing, computers, and speaking. Getting an internship at Parent Infant Programs, I learned very quickly the difference between professionalism at school and in the real world.

The area I would like to improve on is taking the initiative. I have good leadership skills that have been well developed in different situations over my college experience, and my life; however, I struggle with taking the initiative. I have a bad habit of second guessing myself, and have a fear of speaking up. If someone tells me I am in charge of something, or to do something I am fine and take charge right away; however, I am still struggling with taking charge on my own and knowing when that is appropriate and how to do that. The one thing I have learned most about professionalism is that it is always best to ask questions when in doubt and to ask a ton of questions in general. The only way I can learn and grow my knowledge is to tap into the resource of the professionals around me and that in return will help me become more professional and grow my knowledge base.