

SLO V. Critical Thinking

Students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to apply scientific methods of thinking (including logic and empirical reasoning) about children, families, and their well-being. Students will differentiate between their personal and subjective theories about children's development and scientific theories of development rooted in empirical research and based on best practices. In addition, students will demonstrate both currency in information technology appropriate to the discipline and an understanding of the ethical use of such technology.

I have grown in understanding in this area by learning what it really means to use logic and critical thinking when analyzing a situation or even when conducting research. Before coming to Chico State and beginning my major courses, I thought logic and critical thinking skills were mostly applied to math problems. I was completely wrong, and have learned that critical thinking can be used while writing, observing, researching, and solving an issue.

Experiences that have facilitated my growth in the area of critical thinking would be writing research papers, observing and working with children, and through lectures that focused on research, theories, and developmentally appropriate practice. When working with children, you have to analyze situations and think of the best possible approach. There is a lot of problem solving involved in critical thinking when being a role model and teacher for children. For example if children are fighting over a toy, biting, or yelling at someone, teachers must step in to figure out the best possible solution for the situation. We also have to use critical thinking while working with children in order to remember to state things in a

positive rather than negative form as much as possible, and that can require a lot of fast thinking and reasoning. This is an area that I still work on improving all the time. It can be difficult to always remember to state things in a positive form because a lot of our initial reactions are to say "no". Saying no does not really teach the children anything, and does explain to the child what they should be doing instead.

I have learned that through observations and interactions with children, you can really get to know a child's interests, personalities, and dislikes. This involved critical thinking because I was able to look back at my notes to evaluate and analyze the observations and interactions. Evaluating these observation notes can help create closer bonds with children, become better teachers, and see how well items are working in the classroom. These are skills I can always take and use later in life whether it is being a parent, working in child care centers, or as knowledgeable information to share with others.

Being a lifelong learner, I will continue to always use critical thinking when analyzing and evaluating problems, situations, or even for class assignments. Critical thinking allows you to dig deeper, leads to better outcomes, and is a more effective learning strategy than just quickly coming up with solutions. Using logic, critiquing skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and empirical reasoning all involve

dissecting the task into smaller parts, and brainstorming multiple approaches and actions.

In Child Development 353 (Methods of Inquiry in Child Development), I learned how to successfully write a research paper, using statistics and critical thinking I was able to come up with a thesis statement and support it by finding if the data was statistically significant. This expanded my knowledge and strategies of critical thinking, as well as made me a more effective professional.

Child observations in Child Development 251 (Observational Techniques) allowed me to look at my observation notes and reflect on them. I was also able to offer my opinions and considerations while writing papers on the observation notes obtained. This also involved critical thinking by being able to state my own perspective and analyze others opinions as well.

During the self reflection paper I wrote in Child Development 392 (Child Development Practicum), I was able to reflect back on the semester I had interned in the infant room on campus. I was able to evaluate how I have grown as a caregiver, role model, and teacher for the infants. I was able to critique my experience in the infant room, as well as write if I was able to accomplish the goals I set out for myself that semester.

Developing my computer skills has helped me learn new programs I have never even heard of before to conduct my research and analyze statistical data.

Also through my gained knowledge of computer skills I was able to create a group website with two other colleagues in Child Development 492 (Child Development Practice: Children and Families). We chose transitional kindergarten as our topic. I did not know much about the subject before doing the website, and I did not know how to make a website at all. Using the tool yola.com we put all our information together, added graphics, and created links. Before placing our information on the website, we had research facts about transitional kindergarten. Then we narrowed those facts down to become more concise to fit on our webpage and to allow the webpage to be as informative and to the point as possible. When creating a website it is important to not overwhelm the reader, and also not to include information that does not need to be on there. This involved a lot of critiquing and logical thinking to choose what facts should be left on the website and which facts should be removed before we published it. We were also able to gain group and cooperation skills as well as build on communication techniques.