*SLO I.: Foundations of Child Development*

*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.*

My first response to the statement above is that throughout my coursework in the Child Development Major I have learned so many different theories and philosophical foundations that I don’t know where to begin. I have also had many opportunities to participate in volunteer activities working with children from infants to school age children. When I first began my college journey I was working in a childcare facility with children ages 6 weeks to 12 years. I felt very confident when I was working with younger children and felt that I “had a way with children.” Looking back at my experience I see that I did things randomly and unorganized because I didn’t have the background I have now of stages of development for children, communication strategies, and positive redirection.

From my coursework I have learned about theorists such as Piaget, Erickson, and Bronfenbrenner and the developmental stages children go through and the systems that affect their development. This has helped me when I’m working directly with children because children bring in the personal life when they come to a school setting. It’s been helpful to be able to understand behaviors and recognize that it could be something in their home life or it could be related to developmental progress. For example, Erickson’s second stage states that toddlers are going through the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt which means that they need independence but also need to be supported and guided from adults. I was able to connect this theory to practice during my practicum experience in the Toddler class in the Child Development Lab at Chico State. I worked directly with toddlers and observed and supported children accomplishing major self-help skills and physical abilities. The accomplishments and skills and knowledge obtained during this stage of development contribute to autonomous toddlers.

From my coursework in the Child Development Major I have also learned about communication strategies and developmentally appropriate curriculum and practice. I have taken a class specifically on developmentally appropriate practice which focused on learning about DAP and resources such as, the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) tool which is used to assess a child’s developmental level in all domains of child development. During my practicum course I was able to use what I learned in a previous course and apply it to my field experience. I was required to prepare a Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) on a child based on observation notes taken on that child. Another philosophical concept that was a focus of the course in Developmentally Appropriate curriculum and practice was the, “Guides to Speech and Action,” designed by Katherine Read Baker, which consist of communication and behavioral strategies. The main concept I understood and practiced was positive redirection. Through my coursework I gained a better understanding of the “Guides to Speech and Action” and then was able to use those approaches during my practicum experience in the Toddler class. My approaches to challenging behavior were in a positive manner rather than a negative manner because it is more effective in decreasing the challenging behavior. This is especially important with toddlers because they are learning so much and as a teacher you would be constantly telling them no, being negative which is not an environment that will produce optimal development in children.

One assignment I have done through my major coursework is a Cognitive Theory paper that focuses on Piaget’s theory and the stages of development for children. This assignment represents what I have learned in the classroom and how I can apply that when working with children. Another assignment I completed was Behavior Guidance assignments which demonstrates how I applied my knowledge about the “Guides to Speech and Action” particularly looking at positive redirection when dealing with challenging behaviors.