Development and Assessment of Young Children: Portfolio of Semester

*Accurately assess young children with a variety of appropriate observation tools.*

Throughout the semester, we learned about and practiced three observational tools, which can serve as assessments for young children – descriptive narratives, anecdotal records and ABC narratives. Out of all of the assignments and activities I completed, these observations allowed me to move closer to mastery of the first objective of this class. The first observation we discussed and learned how to perform was the descriptive narrative. This consisted of writing down everything a child and others around them did in a particular period of time (in our case, about five to ten minutes for watching a video). After making the observations from the video, we were to come up with a conclusion about the child’s development, develop a follow-up plan as well as rationale to the plan, and lastly, self-evaluate our work and reflect on the experience. I believe this observational tool helped me to learn more about assessing young children because of all of the components of the assignment. Had we just been required to do the observation and draw conclusions, I would not have discovered what to do with those observations (follow-through plan) and why what I did would help that child’s development. This class was the first time I have ever had to go beyond simply making an observation. Based on the grading sheet for this assignment, I think it’s safe to say that the descriptive narratives played a huge role in moving towards mastery of this objective. Although I missed points, they were only for format. I think that gaining all of the points for the conclusion, follow-up plan and rationale was significant. These three parts of the assignment seemed to be the most important because it was where I had to demonstrate my abilities to relate my work to the development of young children and develop a plan to further their development.

Going along with the observations we learned how to carry out, my anecdotal record also helped me to move towards mastery of the above objective. For this assignment, I gained all of the points which means I was able to fulfill all of the components and requirements of the assignment as well as understand how anecdotal records work as observational assessment tools. This type of observation was the most difficult I felt, but I was able to really concentrate on the format and in the end, successfully use the correct format. Again with this assignment, I feel as though the conclusion, follow-through and rationale were significant. In each of these, we had to use our knowledge of young children and their development in order to develop a plan to help their development as indicated in the actual records. With the final observational tool we learned about – ABC narratives – I had some difficulties with it, but still feel like it helped me to work towards mastery of learning to accurately assess children using appropriate observational tools. The information I didn’t complete fully for this observation was the conclusion, follow-through and rationale. I do remember writing this one and having some difficulties developing these based on the behavior I chose to look at. Even though this observation wasn’t as good as my first two, I think overall they all played a role in my mastery. As stated earlier, I had not had much experience with doing these three observations and practicing them in class, as well as completing these assignments made a definite impact.
in my abilities to assess young children. Sometimes when thinking about assessment, I get nervous because I had never had to do it before but I feel more at ease now. In my Early Childhood Curriculum class, we were to develop a theme project for an early childhood classroom. I was able to state within my project that I would use the three assessment tools we’ve learned in this class. Had I not known what these were, I would have been stumped as to how I would use assessments within my project. I know what I learned about observations and assessment will help me beyond this semester as I have more experience in early childhood classrooms. Overall, I wouldn’t say I have fully mastered this objective, but rather have gotten much closer than I was. This is because I will still learn about the observational tools and how to complete them to the fullest through more practice in the future (and through the performance final!).

*Build and use a personal and judiciously reflective understanding of young children and their development.*

Two assignments/activities from the semester have helped me moved closer towards mastery of this objective – reading responses and the queries. In the beginning of the semester, I will admit I was discouraged because I wasn’t completing the reading responses in a way that met the requirements. This class was the first time I had ever been asked to use the text and my personal experiences so much in an assignment, but that’s a good thing. My first couple of reading responses I received “in the ball park”. At the time, I though, what else could I possibly do to make these better. After looking through them, I can see that I wasn’t really using adequate text support or many of my personal experiences (and I am not sure why because I’ve had a lot of experience with young children in early childhood settings). Beginning with my sixth reading response and subsequent responses, I began to fulfill what the reading responses were supposed to be consisted of. While answering the questions, I really began to think about my experiences I’ve had with children and how those experiences related to the questions being asked as well as how those experiences related to the text. Starting with the sixth reading response, I received “below the water line” on those we received feedback for. This was the ultimate goal of the reading responses and I think as the semester went on, I was able to put my thinking “below the water line” which helped my understanding of children’s development. I am the type of person who sees examples of concepts and better understands them. Developing and supporting the concepts on my own really helped me to understand children’s development.

The other assignment we did that helped me move towards mastery of objective two were the queries we completed. The queries were very similar to my reading responses in that my first query did not consisted of a lot of “warranted perspective”. After the first, I decided to start all over and think about it a different way. I started to think more about the factors I had chosen and used a lot more text support to develop my second draft. For my second draft, I received a below the water line and got it posted on the website. My queries continued to be modified and added to as we moved through the chapters. I think this symbolizes growth because as we talked about chapters, I would then realize that my graphic did need more factors to fully support a child’s development. My final query was
my best query because I took what I had done all semester and put everything together to create something which I felt best described a child’s development.

I think these two assignments in particular helped me move towards mastery towards building and using my understanding of young children’s development for several reasons. The first is because both dealt directly with children’s development. The reading responses were based on the readings from Lindon as well as Paley – both which reinforced concepts I had learned previous to this class as well provided me with new information about children’s development. Lindon was especially helpful in reinstating concepts I had learned previous to this class but forgotten (because I hadn’t used the information!). Overall, the two texts along with reading responses helped me to continue building my knowledge base about children and their development. The queries then allowed me to use this information. I was a little skeptical about the queries at first because I had no idea how I would pick just a few factors to describe a child’s development. It turned out good in the end however because I know see that some factors to play a larger role, but also some factors are within others and seeing that relationship is beneficial to understanding development. Right now I cannot say that I have entirely mastered the objective because I feel as though I will continue to learn more and more about children and their development, as well as how to apply it forever. I plan on being a life long learner and not just stopping after college because I still will not know all there is to know about children’s development.

*Design developmentally appropriate learning contexts based on assessment data and understanding of young children’s development.*

For this objective, there are a few assignments we did in this class, as well as another class, that helped me move towards mastery of it. The first is again the observations we did. For each observation assignment, we had to come up with a follow-up plan. Although they were fairly short, they were based on assessing the observations we did as well as on the development of the particular child we observed. Although my ABC narrative wasn’t done as well as the other two, I did do well with the follow-up and rationale for the descriptive narrative and anecdotal records. With both of these, I was able to develop a follow-up plan that would place the child in a situation were learning would take place and their development of a particular domain would be fostered. For example, for my descriptive narrative, I came to the conclusion that the boy I observed could use more experiences that helped develop his fine motor skills as well as language. I then supported this with text which stated why my situation (placing him with peers) would help his development. This was very similar to the anecdotal records. These were definitely good practice for me creating learning environments based on information I had gathered about a child and also helped me to move towards mastery of the objective.

The other assignment from class that I think helped me with this objective was the triads. For the triads, we didn’t design them for children, but they still made a difference in my understanding of creating environments and understanding others’ thinking. This assignment was the first in which I created a learning environment that would be led by the learner. I was very used to the teacher directing everything and the student’s
following. The triads allowed me to see how well it does work when the students’ lead is followed. My first triad plan went really well and was posted for my peers to see. I think this shows that I had an understanding of what the triads were supposed to run like and how I, as the teacher, was supposed to help support my learner. My final triad went really well and I think it is because I had a good experience in my group. It was very interesting to see how everyone’s turned out and reflect on being the teacher, learner and observer. The reflection on the overall triads was very beneficial because I then thought more about what it was like being in all of the positions and how it will benefit me as an early childhood educator. That was another part about the triads that helped me towards mastery of this objective – making connections to early childhood education. Because we didn’t design our activities for young children, making these connections was crucial to my understanding of how I use this type of instruction with young children. For my final query, I put a lot of thought into that part and received all of the points. Overall, the triads helped me move towards mastery because I had to design learning environments which would be engaging and provide meaningful experiences to the learners. I also had to use previous lessons (somewhat as assessments) to decide what I would for the following.

One quick connection I can make to this objective based on another class I took is the theme projects we created for Early Childhood Curriculum. Although they were a lot of work, they were such a great experience. The unit was entirely thought up of by me (except for the use of a few references for songs and poems relevant to my topic). I had never had to do anything even close to this before, so it was a first time deal for me. The reason I feel as though this assignment contributed to my movement towards mastery of objective three is because 1) our units had to be designed for young children (pre-school aged in my case) and I consulted many resources to be sure my activities and lessons were appropriate to this ages development and 2) for each lessons, we had to develop ways to assess our imaginary students. This project allowed me to use what I know about young children to create activities and overall, a huge project that would be led by student learning as well as create meaningful experiences for them.

*Demonstrate the characteristics of a self-directed learning, intellectual alertness, and engagement.*

One of the assignments which helped me master this objective is the reading responses. As described in above objectives, my reading responses gradually got better as the semester went along. I think the part of this objective which really was mastered by this was being a self-directed learner. With many classes I’ve taken, we’ve been assigned homework then have gone over it the next day in class (pretty much word for word). This can be helpful sometimes, but I think that being responsible for learning the materials and responding to them, as we were, then using that information more in other contexts has been helpful. Although we did not directly go over the questions we answered for reading responses, we used that information in class in other ways. Because of this, I had to become a self-directed learner. It was my responsibility to read the text, respond to the text and retain information to be applied later. Going along with this, I moved towards mastery of “intellectual alertness”. In order to apply the information I had learned through the readings and reading responses, I had to tap into my brain. I needed to be
aware of what I knew and how to use that information with other assignments we completed.

Another assignment I felt helped me move towards mastery of this objective was the queries. These also derived from the text as well as other sources I used from other classes. I feel like these assignments helped me become more of a self-directed learner because the queries were individual to each of us in the class. It was like an assignment where there are right and wrong answers (for the most part) but rather we used what we felt was important to development in order to create our graphics and papers.

As for engagement, I think the learning activities we did sporadically in class, group papers as well as the triads helped me to master this. The learning activities, which took place in class, helped me become more engaged because after or during completion of the activities, we discussed them as a whole class and at our tables. The one that stuck out the most was sinking in floating. My table was very engaged in this and I didn’t want to stop doing it until we could figure out what was going on (especially with the tube we tried to get to stop half way in the water). At my table, I had a lot of fun talking with my peers and putting our ideas together to come up with an answer to the questions posed. All of the group paper also helped me to become more engaged in the materials of this class. Through the group papers, I have to bring what I had learned from the reading as well as my previous experiences to contribute to our papers.

*Effectively self-monitor and self-evaluate personal skills in all of the areas above*.

Many of the assignment this semester have helped me to master the objective above. The final triad essay is one of these assignments. One of the aspects of the assignment was to make connections to early childhood education. I have discussed this in above objectives, but I think it relates to this one as well. On the grading sheet for the triad essay, I received all of the points when it came to making those connections. I think being asked to make these connections helped me to self-evaluate what I know about implementing learning environments in early childhood settings and how I will do this in the future. The triads weren’t geared towards young children, but could be modified to do so.

All of the observational tools we learned to use and carried out in class also helped me to move towards mastery of this objective. In each, I had to use all of the skills listed in all objectives. I had to show what I had learned about the development of young children and apply this knowledge. I had to show that I could assess young children in a variety of ways, by using the three observational tools, and use those results to create learning contexts (follow-up plan and rationale). I then had to self-evaluate my work by stating how my work was complete and clear and how my reflections were meaningful and related to the work. We did this for every observational report and I received full points on each. Through these assignments, I really learned how to look critically at my work and evaluate it. Most professors don’t ask their students to evaluate their own work, but rather do it for them. I think it has been beneficial to look at my own work and see where I could have made improvements and where I felt like I meet all of the requirements and explain why.
Overall, all of the assignments in and out of class have played a very significant role in helping me moved towards and reach mastery in the objectives of the class. I have never had a class where I was to reflect on the objectives and really decide whether or not I met them. It was very insightful to think about the objectives in relation to what we did throughout the semester and hopefully will help me to think about future objectives my professors have.