

The Reflection of Field Experience at The Mason Child Development Center

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The Mason Child Development Center (CDC) is the location for this field experience. The CDC was organized to support the George Mason University faculty, staff, and students by providing an excellent on-site child care and play based preschool program. The atmosphere around this area is physically and emotionally safe. They have a playground and a greenhouse outside for planting.

The CDC provides six classrooms which include three year-olds for two classes, four years old for two classes and five year-olds for two classes. The class in the field experience was the Polar Bear class which has Miss Dixie Mauck as the lead teacher and Miss Jessica Gaarda as the assistant teacher. Both teachers work a full-time job and have assistants who work part-time in this class, which include Mr. Sam, Miss Kate and Miss Iva, who are undergraduates in the Education major at GMU.

The routine in the Polar Bear class begins at 7.00 – 8.30 for Breakfast time, then they combine the activities with the Penguins class. At 9.00, the children play outside depending on the weather each day. Next, 10.00 – 10.20 is circle time (calendar/weather) and story time. At, 10.20-11.30, there is center time and after that at 11.30-12.00 is lunch time. After lunch students will do an indoor activity or more outside play. At 12.45-1.00, there is bathroom and story time. The naptime is from 1.00-3.00 pm.

The description of the classroom environment is a general preschool education for three year-olds. This class does not have students with special needs and disabilities. Overall this class has diversity. The Students come from different cultures and nationalities. The class's physically arrangement of students are 20 children, which is separated by gender of eleven girls and nine boys.

At the time of observation, which began around 11.00 – 12.00 pm., the center time was followed by to the daily routine. In the beginning of the observation, Miss Dixie was discussing

about the question “When I am angry I calm down by...”, which was the theme (All About Me/Feeling) in this month. The students were really interested in this discussion and the teacher encouraged them to answer the question about what is the angry feeling come from? Why we angry? How to calm down when we get angry?

After that Miss Dixie introduced the center time by following to the daily routine. The students participated in many activities such as literacy, art, movement, science and math. The students are allowed to choose two other activities in addition to these. From the first activity, they may move from one area to another area of their choosing. The teacher sets up the only rule, which is “You must clean up your part of the an area/activity before you may open a new area/activity”. The class activities depend on the children choosing.

The center time offers four activities for the children to choose. First, the blocks center has four students of three girls and one boy. Miss Iva took care of this group. They built a house and Miss Iva asked them a simple question as “What is this?” “Can you describe this house?” “Where is the door?” “Where is your room?” Furthermore, Miss Iva encouraged the students to try to speak up and think about the color and vocabulary of the house such as red, blue, door, and window. Second is the floor activity which is playing toys. The majority of the children were the boys and Mr. Sam. Those boys enjoyed playing with cars. They played dramatically with interaction similar to racing. The teacher observed them and ask some questions like “What is your car color?” “Why do you choose this color?” Another group played with dough. The students enjoyed molding dough as animals. In this group, there were four girls and a boy. Miss Kate suggested how to create the animals and describe the dough colors. The last group was puzzles. Miss Dixie taught three girls and two boys how to match the puzzle. The students helped each other to complete the animal picture.

From the observation, the boys most likely wanted to do the floor activities more than girls. They liked to play cars and play dramatically like they were a rider. In contrast, with the

girls, who preferred to play with dough, blocks and puzzles more than the boys. In addition, the girls more likely to interact with the teachers and their peers more than the boys. For example, the girls like to ask and answer the question when they participated in the activities. However, the boys like to play alone and ignore to interact with their peers and teachers.

Before lunch, the students one-by-one washed their hands while Miss Jessica taught in the circle time about the English alphabet A-Z. This was really interesting because they learned the alphabet by the names of people in the classroom. For example, the children who are the name that starts with A and sound like A as April, B as Bryan, C as Cathleen, etc.

During lunch time, the teachers and children sat and ate lunch together. The teacher would explain the food like a quesadilla is made of bread, tomatoes and lettuces, which are vegetables. Some students are allergic to cow milk, so they brought from home like apple juice or soy milk. The students really enjoyed eating. One student was very shy to say that she wants some more food. Therefore, the teacher encouraged her to say, Miss Dixie, can I get more please?

Accordingly, this classroom provided many opportunities for young students. For instance, the cognitive development is very important in the early childhood stage. Cognitive development refers to thinking skills, such as learning, understanding, problem-solving, reasoning, memorizing, and attending. Students in this class apply the learned concepts to everyday situations by learning about causes and effects of activities such as completing simple 3-4 piece puzzles as well as similarities and differences in things around them. Most students could match and sort objects by the properties of both shape and color from the puzzle activity. Also, they understood the simple quantity concept when the teacher said "Give me one" and the imagination concept when they can play make-believe with dolls, animals, cars, and people. Thinking skills help make all experiences more meaningful to children.

The language acquisition in the class is effective. Before the students learn the alphabet

by the people's name. The majority in this class are American. The minority are African-American Hispanic and Asian. They do not have any language issues. On the other hand, from the interview with Miss Dixie who is a lead teacher in this class, she mentioned to the boy who is from China has language issues because he has moved to the U.S. almost one year follow after his parents. The parents are Chinese. They taught and spoke with their child with the Chinese language in their home because they prefer the child to be a bilingual person. Sometimes, this boy has a problem to communicating with teachers. Miss Dixie said he sometimes understands the words, but he can not express the word in English word. He just expresses by sign language to communicate with teachers.

Throughout the observation, there were many interactions between the student and teacher, which was either very positive, or negative. During the activities when all the students were able to stay engaged the interactions would be very positive. The teacher would ask questions about the student's feelings during the activities and as the students were able to answer the questions or at least try and express affection openly, thus the relationship remained positive. Also, the students can ask for assistance when having a difficult time. For example, a girl who was washing her hands could not get paper towel. She asked the teachers for help. The students showed pride in their accomplishments like the boy who participate in the block center. He built a tower block higher than the other children. The teacher praised him for his achievement.

The negative interactions between teacher and student showed up in the short time during the observation of aggression when the class change activities. From the observation, the twin boys they did not want to stop playing the toys. When the teacher talked with them, they still played the toys together. As a result, teacher separated them from the toys. First interaction, the twin boys cried but calmed down for a second when the teacher remaided the rules in the classroom.

Physical development refers to both gross and fine motor skills. This reflection is from the activities in the Polar Bears class. Fine motor skills in this class that appeared during lunch time. Most students can feed themselves well. Some of them use eating utensils effectively. Also, another motor skill that was indicated was in the block center activity. They can build a tower from 9-10 small blocks. Also, they can wash and dry their hand before the lunch time as well

Moreover, the gross motor skills development involves using the body's large muscles. Children develop physical awareness by using large muscles when crawling, walking, jumping, climbing, sliding, and throwing a ball. According to this observation, students in this class did not appear to use the gross motor skill too much because the observing time is limited. The students are doing well in the class by using large muscles such as using one hand consistently in most activities and walking around the classroom. They gain self-confidence and a sense of control by using these skills.

Based on this class, they did not have disabled students or students with special needs. The only one case was from the Chinese boy who is struggling with simultaneous bilingualism. The teachers provide techniques to improve his English skill by showing the pictures to, inspire words to him and pronouncing the words slowly. Another adaptation in class showed up about childhood, which students can eat an entire meal independently, pour liquid with some assistance, wash hands without assistance, and learn toilet training.

Nevertheless, the environment in this classroom was disorganized. Some corners of the kitchen were quite a mess. Also, the space in the class is confined because of the surplus number of teachers. There should be four teachers for 20 children, which is sufficient for a preschool class. The environment in the class should be clean and hygienic because three-year-old children like to put everything in to their mouth. As a result, these children will become sick and causes discomfort in the classroom area.

To conclude the reflection on this field experiences, the CDC have an useful information for child development in the classroom. Teachers have many experiences to controlling the class environment. Also, the showed support for learning by including the social environment, cultural objects, cognitive, social, and emotional development. The students in the Polar Bears class have developmental criteria on their age in physical development in fine motor and gross motor.