

Early Childhood Final Observation Reflection

Mary Jane Dickey

Introduction to Early Childhood Education—11:00am

Mrs. Eastman

April 30, 2007

For my third and final observation of an early childhood education institution I visited the preschool classroom of Manchester Nursery School in North Manchester, Indiana. The classroom consisted of eight children, five and six years old. The type of program at Manchester Nursery School is what I will call a “traditional” preschool. After being given the opportunity to observe three different preschool programs, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and a traditional setting, I found that I was comparing and contrasting the events I had observed in each classroom with each other.

When I walked into the preschool classroom of Manchester Nursery School the children had just arrived at school. The students were hanging up their coats, saying goodbye to their parents, and finding an activity to play with before the day would officially begin. Some of the children were putting puzzles together, others were playing the game “Ants in the Pants,” and others were cutting fun shapes out of construction paper. They participated in these and similar activities for about twenty minutes while the teacher was preparing for the morning “circle time.” The free activity play time is similar to the play I observed at the Reggio preschool. While the students were permitted to play with, however, and whatever they wanted to, the students at the traditional classroom were asked to use their inside voices rather than being allowed to speak in any level of voice like at the Reggio school. And in contrast, at the Montessori school the students were quietly working on their individual activities, while in the other two classrooms allowed their students to chat with each other.

The classroom environment of the traditional preschool seemed to stimulate learning due to the abundance of activities available to the students. During the morning play time the children were given the opportunity to explore many different things, like

the play kitchen area, and the art area, and putting puzzles together. The other two preschools also gave students opportunities to explore through play activities. The physical classroom environment had artwork done by the students on the walls as decoration. There also were springtime seasonal decorations on the wall to brighten up the room as well. The decorations did not appear to be too distracting, which promotes and enables a stimulating learning environment, which is similar to the Montessori school philosophy. The traditional preschool classroom was smaller in dimensions than the rooms of the Montessori and Reggio classrooms which were spacious and large. Even with the diminutive size the classroom was exceptionally clean and tidy. The toys in the kitchen area were all put away and were not scattered outside of the kitchen corner, which leads me to believe that the teacher values the space she is given and wants her students to know that cleaning up toys and other activities when they are done being played with is important. The Montessori school also emphasized tidiness; however, because the rooms were much larger, if a student was working on an activity, such as building with blocks on the floor, they were allowed to keep their work out. At the Reggio preschool clean up time was given but it was not enforced as closely as in the traditional preschool classroom.

The teacher kept to herself for the most part while the children were busy playing at the beginning of the day. Because of the small class size she was able to see and what everyone was doing without walking around the room. There were not very many needs to take disciplinary action; the children were very well behaved, which also reduced the need for the teacher to keep a constant eye out for troublemakers. The teacher did participate and walk around during part of the morning playtime. While some of the

students where playing an “Ants in the Pants” game she walked over to them and tried to get a few of the plastic ants into the plastic blue pants. She encouraged the children trying to shoot the ants into the pants and gave them positive words if an ant did not land in the pants. The children interacted and played with each other well. I could see that they were learning how to cooperate and share toys with one another, and they all seemed to get along quite well. Because the teacher seemed to be very positive and encouraged the children she was contributing to the students’ emotional well-being. As I walked around before circle time I asked the children about what they were doing and they seemed to be socially and emotionally apt through their interaction with me. During the calendar circle time each child was given the opportunity to answer questions related to the calendar procedure which allows the teacher chance to assess progress and facilitate learning for children if they were unclear about the calendar question.

The children at the traditional preschool displayed developing physical skills through their play with the “Ants” game. The skill of the game is to use one finger to snap the end of the ant so it flies or spins into the pants. All of the children had the control to snap the ants the right way to make it fly in the air. The cognitive skills displayed by the children were evident while I watched a few of them putting puzzles together. I could see them deciphering where each piece went and what pieces fit together to complete the picture on the puzzle. All of the children were interacting and cooperating together throughout their play time, which demonstrates their developing social skills. The children at the Reggio and the Montessori school also demonstrated physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills through the activities and playtime I observed.

The traditional preschool curriculum is multicultural in that they are learning about the different spring holiday traditions from other countries. The main curriculum for Montessori schools is anti-bias in that they feel that all children are in charge of making their own decision no matter their race, ethnicity, or sex. This year each class is discussing and learning about Europe as a part of a multicultural curriculum. The Reggio approach feels that the curriculum emerges from the children. The teacher and the children negotiate about what concepts will be learned and talked about in the curriculum. In this way the curriculum is automatically multicultural and anti-bias because they are including all children in the classroom. From my observations I have noticed that the curriculum for the preschools is typically anti-bias in which all children can participate and gain knowledge from, even the special needs children. It is important to teach children multiculturalism so they grow and develop a better understanding and tolerance for all the people in the world.

Through my opportunities to observe three different early childhood institutions I have learned about myself as a future educator as well as about how capable young children really are. The elements of the traditional preschool really reiterated all of my feelings about how children learn. I discovered while at the Reggio school that the substantial amount of noise really did not settle well with me, nor did the clutter in the rooms. I felt, however, that the fine arts focus, at the Reggio school, is a very important aspects to learning and discovering. At the Montessori preschool I was pleased to learn that children are really are capable of choosing school work over playing when given the opportunity to learn at their own pace and make their own decisions.