

Case Study: Savannah

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Abstract

The case study involved observing a preschool aged child's physical, cognitive, and emotional developments. The case study child chosen was Savannah who is a three year old girl born on November 17, 2005. Savannah began attending Blessed Beginnings this year. Blessed Beginnings is similar to a daycare. While visiting Blessed Beginnings, observations were made with Savannah's physical, cognitive, and emotional developments. Through observations, one could see that Savannah is very active, and she enjoys playing. She is able to play with other children and work well with them. Savannah also enjoys reading. Savannah is able to read to herself, but she does not know the correct words in the book. Savannah can make up her own story by looking at the pictures. Savannah is very intelligent and mature for her age.

This case study will be conducted at Blessed Beginnings in North Manchester, on a child named Savannah. Savannah was born on November 17, 2005 to Jarrod and Jane. Jarrod's and Jane's occupations are a bar manager and a production manager. Savannah is an only child, and they do not have any pets. Their family lives in North Manchester, which puts them near a set of grandparents. Savannah is extremely intelligent and mature for her age. She is very verbal around others and clearly not shy. Savannah has a large imagination, some examples are that she likes to pretend she is ice-skating, and pretend that there are good aliens at the daycare. Savannah enjoys reading to herself by looking at the pictures and making up her own stories. At home Savannah likes to play Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders, and Cooties. Savannah seems to like most vegetables; however she does not like spinach. Speaking with teachers at the daycare, they said Savannah does not like it when she does not get her way. An employee at Blessed Beginnings said that during her time working there, she has seen Savannah have two major fits. It is difficult to imagine Savannah having fits because she seems polite and well behaved. An interesting fact about Savannah is that her parents talked to her like a person when she was an infant. Going along with that, they also sang to her.

Savannah was born on November 5, 2007. From observation of Savannah, the mother most likely experienced a normal pregnancy with this child. However, compared to other children at Blessed Beginnings, Savannah is much smaller in height and weight. According to Feldman (2007), the average three year old girl weighs approximately thirty pounds, while the average three year old girl is approximately thirty-five inches tall. From observation of Savannah, her appearance seems to be below average in both height and weight.

Savannah is a very active three year old girl who has developed the gross motor skills for a typical three year old. According to Feldman (2007), major gross motor skills for a three year old involve jumping, ability to climb stairs without the help of an adult, hops, and is unable to stop suddenly. Savannah is capable of doing everything from that list except stopping suddenly. While observing Savannah, she enjoys doing what most young preschoolers enjoy: jumping, playing, running, and other fun activities. Savannah has just started getting involved with gymnastics this year. She knows how to do flips and she can almost do the splits. Savannah is able to play with the other children at Blessed Beginnings, and she is capable of playing by herself. Majority of the time observed, she would read to herself, or have someone read to her. Savannah also likes to pretend play. Savannah has a huge imagination. She pretended to ice-skate once, and even pretended that there were good aliens at the daycare.

Savannah is still mastering her fine motor skills. Fine motor skills for a three year old are more difficult to achieve compared to gross motor skills. According to Feldman (2007), “The skills involved in fine motor movements require a good deal of practice.” Fine motor skills involve using smaller muscles. While observing Savannah, the fine motor skills she was able to perform were working on puzzles, coloring, and eating with a spoon or fork. From observation, Savannah is right handed. According to Savannah’s teacher, she is the best at coloring in her class. For one of the artifacts for the case study, Savannah made a story. Savannah would draw pictures on the paper, and then said what she wanted written down. She attempted to write “The End” on the back page, but it looks more like scribbles. Savannah would still be considered to be in the scribbling

stage, but is entering the shape stage, according to Feldman (2007). In her story, she was able to draw water, fish, and herself.

Toilet-training is a major concern to parents. There are many different opinions on what is the appropriate age for children to be toilet-trained. According to Feldman (2007), “In 1957, fully 92% of children were toilet-trained by the age of 18 months. In 1999, only 25% were toilet-trained at that age, and just 60% at 36 months.” Savannah is about three and a half years old, and is still using pull-ups. However, she was in the process of being toilet-trained in February, so she could very well be toilet-trained now. According to Feldman (2007), “The current guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics support a well-known pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton, who suggests that there is no single time to begin toilet training and that training should begin only when children show they are ready” (p.226). If parents rush their children into becoming toilet-trained, they are just going to make matters worse for their child. The child may become frightened to go on the toilet, and they would be uncomfortable.

Through observation, Savannah seems to be living a healthy, normal childhood. Some of her favorite foods are spinach, and other vegetables most children her age dislike. Savannah also takes naps at the day care. It may take her awhile to fall asleep, but she normally sleeps the whole nap time. Savannah will develop more fine and gross motor skills as she becomes older and body becomes stronger.

Through observation of Savannah, she is very intelligent and mature for her age. Compared to other children at Blessed Beginnings, her cognitive development is more advanced than the other children. However, Savannah’s physical development is not as significant as her peers. One of Savannah’s main cognitive developments achieved is her

language skills. She is highly developed in this area, and in syntax. According to Feldman (2007), “Language blooms so rapidly between the late 2s and the mid-3s.” From observation of Savannah, she most likely started speaking at an early age. Savannah’s mother stated that her and her husband talked to Savannah as a person when she was a baby, they did not use ‘baby talk’” (p.247). This could be a reason why she speaks so well. Another reason Savannah’s language is so highly developed, and could be a reason for her maturity, is that she is an only child. Savannah is constantly surrounded by adults at home; therefore, she is around people that use correct grammar, and act mature.

Through observation of Savannah, she uses private speech. Private speech is basically where one talks to themselves out loud, and it is not intended for others. Everyone has used private speech sometime in their life, mainly when one is trying to think. Savannah has used private speech while reading and playing with toys. According to Feldman (2007), Vygotsky suggests that “Private speech facilitates children’s thinking and helps them control their behavior” (p.248). Using private speech may also lead to preparation for pragmatics. Pragmatics deals with communicating effectively and appropriately with others. From observing Savannah, she communicates well with others, and this could be the cause of her using private speech.

Savannah recently transferred to Kid’s Camp, which is where the Preschool is located. Normally, the Preschool is for children that are four to six years of age. Savannah transferred about four months after her third birthday. Her parents and teachers believed that she was ready to begin Preschool. The reason she transferred so early could be that her zone of proximal development was not being challenged enough. According

to Feldman (2007), “The zone of proximal development is the level at which a child can almost, but not fully, comprehend or perform a task without assistance” (p.244).

Savannah was capable of doing most activities without assistance. Savannah’s teachers stated that she was the best at coloring in her class. Savannah was able to stay within the lines, while her peers scribbled all across the paper.

Savannah is also able to count. How high she can count is unknown. According to Feldman (2007), “ By the age of 4, most preschoolers are able to carry out simple addition and subtraction problems by counting and are able to compare different quantities successfully” (p.240). However, not only can she count numbers, but she can also count out objects. While testing her on her counting abilities, she was able to count out how many animal crackers she had left on her napkin. Savannah also enjoys reading. Compared to her peers, she is advanced in this area as well. Her peers need the guidance of teachers to read to them, while Savannah is capable of reading to herself. Savannah does not recognize the words in the books, but instead she makes up her own stories according to the pictures. From observing her peers, no one else tries to read and make up their own stories.

Savannah's cognitive development makes her stand out as one of the more intelligent students in the classroom. She stands out in not only simple tasks such as reading and counting, but in abstract things such as coming up with her own stories when she reads books.

Through observations of Savannah, it is clear that she has developed socially and emotionally. On the first day visiting Blessed Beginnings, Savannah was able to introduce herself and ask and answer many questions. This was surprising because being

a new person in her environment; one would think that children would be hesitant to meet someone new. However, children in the preschool stage are very curious about everything and they will ask many different types of questions.

Play is important for preschoolers to be involved in. Being engaged in play can lead to the development of friendships. According to Feldman (2007), “Children around the age of three, have relations with peers based on the desire for companionship, play, and fun” (p.271). Savannah’s mother shared that Savannah is able to interact well with others, and she has three best friends at Kid’s Camp, who are Bryce, Kayla, and Emma. Savannah is also able to share with her friends. This is difficult to believe because the typical thought of an only child is that they have trouble sharing. Through observation of Savannah, it is easy to see why she is able to share; Savannah has a laid back personality.

When asked if Savannah knew the difference between right and wrong, Savannah’s mother replied yes. Through observation of Savannah, it is easy to see that she has an understanding of what is right and wrong. At the age of three however, Savannah is aware of some things that are right and wrong, but she has much more to learn as she grows older.

Savannah being so mature for her age could be the result of effective parenting. According to Feldman (2007), there are four types of parenting: authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and uninvolved. Out of these four, Savannah’s parents fit best under authoritative. Authoritative parents are firm when setting rules, but they will give explanations to their child of why they should behave in a particular way. According to Feldman (2007), “The descriptions for children that have authoritarian parents include:

being independent, friendly with peers, and cooperative (p.276).” All these descriptions fit how Savannah acts.

Savannah has shown great social and emotional developments at Blessed Beginnings. Savannah has no problems getting along with the other children. She is capable of working and playing by herself and with other children. Savannah is also well behaved and has a good sense of what is right and wrong.

I am very glad I chose to do my case study at Blessed Beginnings. It took me several visits to determine the child I wanted to work with. I remember the first day entering the toddler room; Savannah was one of the first children to come up to me. She was able to tell me her name, and answer other questions. Savannah was also rather attached to me from the beginning. She always wanted me to read to her, or just be around me. This helped me in choosing Savannah for my case study.

While observing Savannah, I noticed that she is very active. I never saw her sitting down for long periods of time unless she was reading. She was always moving around playing some type of game, whether it was by herself, or with friends. I noticed Savannah playing pretend play several times. She pretended to ice-skate one time, and she wanted me to join her. We skated around the room, and other children began to ice-skate too. I also saw Savannah play with a ball. She was not able to catch it, but she was able to throw it to other children.

I was not able to observe Savannah during the times where they actually had class. However, Savannah still showed me her cognitive developments during activities. Savannah enjoys reading with an adult, or by herself. I liked to watch her read by herself because she would look at the pictures, and make up her own story. I never noticed any

of the other children making up their own story; they always had a teacher read to them. For an artifact, I had Savannah help me make up a story. She would tell me what to write, and then she would draw the pictures for it. She was able to make pictures, but when she tried to write letters, it was more of a scribble. Savannah also speaks very well. I believe this is because her parents spoke to her as a person when she was a baby, they did not use baby talk.

Savannah is very social at Blessed Beginnings. She is able to play well with the other children. She also is very good about sharing. This surprised me because she is an only child. The typical thought of only child children is that they have problems sharing because they do not have anyone to share with at home. Savannah also seems to have a good idea of what is right and wrong. She listens to what her parents and teachers tell her to do.

I believe the only two struggles I had during the whole experience was slow responses from the parents and not being able to see Savannah in a classroom setting. I sent Savannah's parents questions to each of the sections of developments. I was only able to use their responses on one paper. However, I was still able to use the textbook for information. Not seeing Savannah in the classroom was difficult when writing the cognitive paper. In the daycare, I mainly saw Savannah doing physical and emotional developments. I enjoyed working with Savannah and observing what preschoolers can and can not do. It was interesting to see what the average preschooler should be like in the textbook and then compare it to what I was observing with Savannah.

References

Feldman, R.S. (2007). *Child development*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson

Prentice Hall.

J. Thompson, Interview, February 25, 2009

Physical Development Artifact



I took this picture of Savannah for the physical development artifact. I wanted Savannah to show her muscles, and show how strong she was. Savannah is about average height for a preschooler, and is close to average on her weight.

Cognitive Development Artifacts





I added these two pictures of Savannah for the cognitive development artifact. In the first picture, Savannah is coloring a picture of a girl in outer space. I brought in this picture because with prior observations, Savannah pretended that we were “good aliens” and we had to capture the “bad aliens”. The first picture could also count towards her physical development artifact because she is using fine motor skills to color the picture. The second picture shows Savannah reading the story we made together. I knew she enjoyed reading, but she does not know the correct words on the pages, so instead she makes up the stories based on the pictures shown. I had Savannah tell me what she

wanted the story to say, and I would write the words out for her. Then Savannah and I would draw pictures based on the story.

Emotional Development Artifact

1. Does Savannah have a best friend at Kid's Camp? Yes, Bryce, Kayla and Emma (this is what she told me)
2. Does she interact well with other children at Kid's camp? Yes
3. Does she have trouble sharing with other children? No
4. Have you noticed Savannah ever involved in functional play? (Play that involves repetitive activities) If so, what are some activities?
Playing Break the Ice and Cootie
5. Have you noticed Savannah ever doing constructive play? (Play with objects to produce or build something) If so, what has she built recently?
House with Lincoln Logs and Flower land (her words) with Lego blocks
6. Have you noticed Savannah taking part in parallel play at Kid's Camp? (Children play with similar toys, in a similar manner, but do not interact with each other) I have not seen this, but don't usually have the opportunity to observe her at Kids Kamp
7. Has Savannah participated in onlooker play? (She watches others play, but does not actually participate, she may give ideas to help the others in play) If so, can you give an example?
Only if told that she has to wait her turn on something, but they will participate as soon as it is her turn
8. Has Savannah been involved in cooperative play? (Play in which children interact with one another, take turns and play games) Yes
9. Does Savannah play make-belief or pretend play? Yes If so, can you think of any examples?
With her little people doll house
10. Being an only child, do you feel Savannah has a more difficult time interacting and playing with other children? No, she is very social and has surprised me with how well she interacts with other children considering she didn't start going to daycare until she was almost 3
11. Do you think Savannah knows the difference between right and wrong? Yes

12. If Savannah watches TV at home, what types of show does she usually watch? Cartoons

-Movies? Animated

13. Do you feel Savannah has developed empathy? (Understanding of what another individual feels)

-Example: Getting someone a tissue if she sees them crying. Yes, she has actually done this for me when I have cried and has then hugged me and told me it would be alright.

14. From being an only child, do you feel Savannah acts more mature for her age compared to other children the same age? I don't think

that it comes from being an only child, I think it is the time we (her parents, grandparents and great-grandparent) has spent reading to her, talking to her and explaining things to her when she asks about them. Although, it may be true that a second, third, fourth, etc. child may not receive the same one-on-one time because there are more children to care for.

I used the interview with Savannah's mother for my emotional development artifact. Through observations Savannah works well with the other children at Blessed Beginnings. Savannah has demonstrated the different types of play. Savannah's mother believes that Savannah knows the difference between right and wrong. Through observations, I was able to see that this statement was true. Savannah follows the rules, and listens to the teachers.

To the parents of Savannah Thompson:

My name is Lauren Nash, and I am taking Child Development at Manchester College. One of our requirements for the class is to do a case study on one child from our field experience. I am doing my field experience at Blessed Beginnings, and I choose to do my case study on Savannah. For the case study, I will observe Savannah on her Physical, Cognitive, and Emotional (Social/Personality) developments. I would need to have your permission to do my case study on Savannah, and it would be great if you would allow me this opportunity. Would it be alright if I had a way to contact you and ask you questions about her developments? If so, what would be the best way to contact you, telephone or e-mail? If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact me by phone-(502) 751-4827 or e-mail- lnash@spartans.manchester.edu. Thank you for your time!

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