Philosophy of Early Childhood Education

The theories that would guide my teaching have drastically changed since I started school for early childhood education. I started my classes with a few years of background experience behind me thinking that Piaget and Vygotsky were the theorists that I felt closely followed my feelings of how children learn best. Now, as I am close to graduating and in the middle of student teaching, I feel that Gardner and Bronfenbrenner’s theories are just as important as Piaget and Vygotsky in how children learn best. I’ve grown to be passionate about social emotional development in children. I feel this skill is just as important as academic growth.

In order to develop those social emotional skills in children I would include many play areas like a dress up area, kitchen area, music center, science center, etc. This social emotional development coincides with Vygotsky’s theory of self-regulation. Self-regulation emerges when a child regulates the behavior of themselves or a peer. Pretend Play is a huge part of it. During pretend play the children take on roles and change their language and behavior accordingly. I believe that children learn best when opportunities are created for hands on learning activities like experiments, games, and putting on plays. One day all the children can dress as their favorite book character. My class will include activities where they can experience on their own and get their hands on manipulatives. During student teaching in order to create pictures with shapes, the children loved the construction paper cut up shapes in order to manipulate. I also created sight word blocks where they built the sight words on top of a Lego. Another example could be feeling bugs when we discuss a bug unit or bringing in acorns to feel and smell when we discuss the lifestyle of squirrels.

The more I have experienced in the early childhood classrooms I see that every child learns best in their own intelligence. This goes along with Howard Garner’s theory of multiple intelligences. These multiple intelligences can range from Kinesthetic (movement of the body), interpersonal, intrapersonal, mathematical analysis, musical thinking, etc. This is stating that one child’s intelligence where they learn best can be kinesthetic, and another child’s could be through interpersonal (relating to others). Some children can learn best through one or more of these intelligences. I personally learn best through seeing a visual and then doing the problem by myself through practice. In my center I would create lessons or hands on activities that would center on different intelligences. In a math lesson, for those mathematical I can teach through counting of numbers on the number chart. Another child I can use music or a song to learn how to count.

I want my students to feel accepted and loved. I will reassure them that it is okay to make mistakes. During student teaching if I make a mistake I will apologize directly to the students. This lets them know that everyone makes mistakes and it is okay. If a child feels comfortable and accepted, the more learning there is. I believe the purpose of education is to give students the tools to be successful in life. Each child needs a secure, stimulating, and respectful environment to promote learning. My feelings above go along with Bronfenbrenner. He believes that children shape their environment as they are shaped by it. In my class I want to create a safe haven as their “environment.” I want myself and other teachers to learn from their students just as the students learn from them. This growth in turn helps our classroom and school in benefitting more children and keeping them on a successful path. One last philosopher I believe has great strategies for working with children is Haim Ginott. The points he states that I feel will guide my actions as a teacher is using I messages. For example, “I feel sad when you aren’t listening.” This takes a blaming tone away and avoids hurting their feelings or lowering their self-esteem.

In conclusion, I see now that my philosophy since I first started school has been added onto tremendously. Through the many observations and experiences I’ve had in different school districts I have learned much more about teachers and children. The more I understood children, the more theorists I believe have explained other and true ways children can learn best.