(Your Name Goes Here)

ECE 46

Infant and Toddler Observation

October 26th, 2015

Infant and Toddler Observation Assignment

**Introduction**

A 23 month old boy, who for the purpose of this assignment we will call Bruce, was observed for approximately twenty minutes. Bruce was observed during class time in his early childhood center where he spends his days with his three care teachers and around twelve other toddlers. The room is set up with various centers including an interactive science center, block center, music and movement center, and reading center. Bruce spent the majority of his time during the observation in the indoor play center – a carpeted set of stairs leading to a platform with manipulatives and a wide wooden slide attached. The room is set up largely with neutral tone colors and does not appear to be too overwhelming for the toddlers in it.

**Emotional Domain**

In terms of emotional development for a typical 23 month year old toddler Bruce seems to be right on track. There were a couple of instances in which Bruce began to show awareness of others and their feelings. When sliding down the slide and bumping into another child, causing that child to tumble down the slide, Bruce looked at him and said “uh-oh”, pointing at the child and looking for a care teacher. The child in question was okay, as he landed on the gym mat at the bottom of the slide, but Bruce showed concern for him, knowing that he could have potentially been hurt. In another instance, a boy slid down the slide head first into a pile of blocks at the bottom of the slide. Again, the child was okay but stayed on the mat with his head down for a few moments. During that time, Bruce went to him and touched his arm while looking at him. Bruce appeared to be checking up on this boy, making sure that he was not hurt. This simple empathetic behavior typically begins right around the 24 month mark, implying Bruce may be slightly ahead of the curve (Wittmer and Petersen, 2006).

**Social Domain**

Throughout my observation of Bruce he constantly approached other children to play beside them. There was very little communication happening but plenty of signs showing that Bruce was at the beginning stages of social interaction. At one point, Bruce approached a child who was playing with a marble maze. Without any verbal communication between the two, Bruce just began picking up pieces and dropping them in the maze, watching as they traveled down. Each time a ball or marble made it through the maze, Bruce would get a big smile on his face and pat his knees repeatedly, looking at the other child as if to look for approval. The other boy continued his play and smiled back at Bruce each time but outside of that remained fairly independent. The two boys were engaged in a similar activity and took turns dropping a ball down the maze, occasionally acknowledging each other’s success – a type of play that would be categorized as parallel play with mutual regard (Wittmer and Petersen, 2006).

As mentioned above, Bruce also showed signs of empathetic behavior. When first approaching the science center, there was a girl playing with a wooden tower that had ramps all the way down. She was dropping various items down the tower, watching them travel down via the ramps and Bruce toddled over excitedly. He grabbed an item to put down the ramp but in doing so pushed the girl out of the way. It seemed unintentional and after his item made it to the bottom of the tower, he got excited in the same way he did with the marble maze. When he looked back in the girl’s direction she had already moved on and Bruce seemed to look a little disappointed. It seemed as though Bruce was hoping to play alongside the girl rather than by himself.

**Cognitive Domain**

Bruce was observed thinking quite a bit while he was playing. There were multiple instances where Bruce would stop what he was doing and just observe his surroundings. Bruce would watch the other children, look intently at the toys he was playing with, and watch what happened when he dropped marbles or balls into the mazes that he played with. While Bruce did not stay focused on just one activity throughout the observation, he did show a desire for repetition. While at the slide, he continuously climbed up and down the stairs, occasionally varying the way he got up, while at the science center he repeatedly dropped the same toy down the wooden tower, and while at the marble maze he watched the ball fall through it over and over. Additionally, while at these areas, it was clear that Bruce had an understanding of cause and effect. Each time he dropped a ball down the maze, he watched intently as it traveled down and then celebrated either to himself or with the child nearby when it made it to the bottom.

**Language Domain**

It was interesting that in many other domains Bruce seemed to be slightly above average in terms of development, but I was unable to observe his language development as clearly. The only time I heard Bruce communicate verbally in fact was when he slid into another boy on the slide, knocking him down, and saying “uh-oh”. It could have just been a coincidence that I did not hear Bruce talk outside of this one instance but it does not mean that Bruce was uncommunicative. Bruce was still able to communicate with his peers through his facial expressions and gestures. Bruce showed joy, excitement, and approval of others when he smiled and patted his knees and empathy when checking up on his peers who could have been hurt. He also offered a ball to the boy playing with the marble maze as if to say “here, it’s your turn.” For a very brief period of time, Bruce was playing peek-a-boo with his care teacher laughing and smiling at her, communicating that he enjoyed what was happening.

**Physical (Motor) Domain**

In regards to physical development and gross motor skills, we know that infant and toddlers will practice skills over and over until they master them (Wittmer and Petersen, 2006). Bruce is a clear example of this repetition and desire for mastery. Each time Bruce tried climbing the stairs, he did so very deliberately, and each time he seemed to explore new possible ways of getting up. He repeated the same action over and over as he explored his body within the environment and pushed himself to master the action of climbing up the stairs. It is important to note that Bruce’s environment was set up nicely by his care teachers to encourage this type of exploration, allowing the children in the room to move freely and over different types of terrain.

When coming down from the stairs Bruce almost always used the slide, however, one time I observed him climbing down the stairs. When coming down the stairs Bruce moved very slowly and held on to the side of the structure, reaching for each step with his foot and feeling around for it before committing. Even going up, Bruce still needed to use his hands on the steps most of the time, which is completely normal for a child his age. According to our text, the typical age for a toddler to begin taking steps one at a time begins around the 24 month mark. It seems like based on his current progress and persistence, Bruce will have no problem meeting that milestone.

**Conclusion and Reflection**

No matter how many times I do something like this – observe for a class or when I get a chance at work to just sit back and watch my campers – I am always pleasantly surprised by how much you notice. It is great getting to watch a child and apply what is being taught while also getting to know them a little bit better. In my role at camp I am constantly trying to build in time for my counselors to just step back from the group for a moment and just watch them interact with each other and the activity and this just reinforces my desire to do that for them.

References

Wittmer, D., & Petersen, S. (2006). *Infant and toddler development and responsive program*

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