THE ROLE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING PROGRAM: AN INSTRUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Human development is an undergraduate major designed to provide the student with an interdisciplinary understanding of the dynamics of growth and development over the lifespan, in order that the student be prepared to move into graduate work in the human services, work effectively with people in an organized setting and enhance the quality of his own life, relationships and environment.

People who work and live effectively with other people need to know, understand, and be able to accept, empathize and relate with as many human beings as possible. Teachers who cannot transcend their own experience, or who can interact comfortably only with others exactly like themselves soon find they are without relating, facilitating and problem-solving skills. They are both deprived and depriving.

To be useful to others, students need both outside information — that which comes from organized bodies of factual knowledge and theory derived from sophisticated and careful scientific procedures, and inside information — that which comes from awareness of one's own experience and how it supports, extends or challenges the validity of outside data. They need conceptual frameworks for organizing information; they need a learning context which is confluent, which involves them in the sharpening of their own intellectual and emotional self-reliance. They need the clarity of their own philosophy and premises, a clarity which is cognizant of and at ease with the philosophies and premises of others.

Components of the Human Development curriculum have always been an integral part of the Early Childhood Education program since its inception. The Human Development component provides the generic core of information, understanding, values and skills which help students perceive themselves and others in the context of living their unique lives; the Early Childhood Education component provides the core which enables the teacher to enhance the quality of the daily lives of the children, and their families, with whom they work.

One of the assignments many Early Childhood Education students elect in their Human Development experience is to write a position paper on the usefulness of human development information in the training of early childhood educators. Christine Jackson's article, which follows, spells out an answer to "Why take Human Development?"

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