This is the handout I give to students on how to write their “Brief Written Assignments.” This handout also explains the rational and use of this assignment.

Susan Howland Thompson, LCSW
Adjunct Instructor, ECE Department
530-941-3778

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Brief Written Assignments

About one third of your grade in this class is based on your Brief Written Assignments. Students have taught me that taking tests is not useful in learning material about young children. Instead of tests, we will have Brief Written Assignments. I will award up to 5 points for each of assignment. Points are based on your ability to integrate the knowledge into your daily thoughts and actions.

Your Brief Written Assignments are your opportunities to prove to me you have learned the material. Learning means you have changed. In your assignments, please tell me how this information has changed you, and/or how you "experience" this material. I want you to consider the broader meaning of "experience," not just something you put on a resume. How do you experience a colorful sunset in the evening? Do you sit calmly and watch the colors? Does your heart beat faster and do you breathe deeper because the beauty moves you? Do you shrug your shoulders and move on with life because this is not an important experience for you? How do you think you pet experiences your kitchen? Have you ever stooped down on your hands and knees to see what your doggie or kitty sees? Is your pet's experience more important to him or her when you are talking, playing, or stroking your pet?

When you write your Brief Written Assignments, please try to talk about how you experience the new information. And please ask me for help if I am not clear. I want everyone to receive an "A" in class, and I want to help you receive good grades.

For each Brief Written Assignment, you will answer the questions:

1. What is new information to you? What is not new?

2. How do you experience this information; what meaning does this information have in your life? How does this information change you?

Please ask me if you have any questions about the Brief Written Assignment or the Forum Discussions; I want you to earn an "A" in this class, and you must complete this assignment correctly to earn an "A."
This is a sample of the Brief Written Assignment. This assignment was an actual entry by a student, and the student gave me permission to share this with you; it is an outstanding example. In the sample, the student has written about an assignment for ECE 12, Infant/Toddler Learning, on prenatal development. You will see in this sample that the student will comment on two readings and a video for the week’s assignment.

Sample Brief Written Assignment

The online book titled "Prenatal Development", was extremely interesting for me because there was so much unfamiliar information within it. The new information to me is just how intricate prenatal development is. That at every moment after conception, something developmentally relevant is occurring. I was especially fascinated at the idea that at as early as 7 weeks gestation, the fetus is developing his/her sense of touch. Also, during the 8-11 week of gestation a fetus opens his mouth resulting in properly forming the bone structures of the mouth and nose. Everything happens with the result of improving the development.

Prenatal development is not something I have truly investigated even when I was pregnant with my two children, but there were some things I did know. For instance, I knew that a baby is most responsive to its mothers voice. That this voice is the most clear in the womb and this knowledge is one reason why many mothers, myself included, enjoy talking and singing to their unborn children. The other fact I had already been informed of is the effect a mother's stress has on a fetus. "Take it easy, don't stress" is all I heard from my doctor and he informed me why it was so important to stay calm. The fetus feels what the mother feels. Just like the online book saying that the fetus can taste some flavors the mother ingests, the fetus can also sense stress, good or bad.

Chapter three outlines what I would consider to be exceptional infant/toddler care giving. Some of this information is not new to me. For instance, the care giving routines of feeding, diapering, toilet learning, washing, bathing, and grooming was something I knew an infant/toddler caregiver would be responsible for. What I did not know is that all of these routines should be used as opportunities for attachment. While looking for infant care centers for my children, I have witnessed many missed opportunities for attachment to take place and unfortunately it seemed the caregivers were more concerned with gossip and other work duties. For example, one care center had a worker feeding multiple high chaired babies at once. When this worker had so many babies to feed she could not provide the one on one attention the babies needed to form a relationship. This feeding routine brings me to the video. The caregiver in this video used feeding time to teach self-help skills. The trust given to the child to get his own milk is not only encouraging to the child but also helps him gain confidence.

All of the information I gained from the online book, chapter three, and the video changed me because it makes pregnancy even more phenomenal in my eyes and also emphasizes the importance of relationship-based curriculum. This new understanding gives me a new appreciation for prenatal development because it is so complex. I also have a new appreciation for building relationships while performing daily activities.