

Project #1: Alex Little

Comprehensive Description of Ali

Ali turned four years old in August of 2015 and is attending school at the Early Learning Center for her second year. When interacting with peers and adults, Olivia holds strengths in multiple categories such as, Measure 5, taking turns, Measure 11, conflict negotiating, Measure 3, expressions of empathy, Measure 12, shared use of space and material, Measure 16, language in conversation, and Measure 29, memory and knowledge. Although she demonstrates some of the integrating qualities, I would suggest that she is in the building category of these certain self and social development skills.

One day, Ali approached the science station that involved looking at different items under a microscope. Within a few minutes some peers began to come up to the science table. While Ali was taking her turn, the others began to say that they wanted their turns. She responds, "How about I have four minutes because I am four years old? After me, they can have a turn." I explained to the other children that Olivia wanted to have her four minute turn and that they could have their turns of four minutes after her. One child was frustrated and wanted to immediately take his turn. Ali recognized he was frustrated and allowed him to take have his turn although her four minutes were not finished and she then moved on to another activity. Another example of her social development is when her and other children were using Legos. Ali asked her peers if she could use some pieces to build a castle and offered to trade pieces if she could use the Legos near them. I believe that because she has been in the Early Learning Center for over a year and has a younger brother, she has developed skills of taking turns, negotiating conflict, expressing empathy for others, and shared use of space and materials. When interacting with teachers, Ali discusses an assortment of things. She asks permission to do different things such as asking if she can have different colored paint, use tape or glue, help clean up, or make snack. She talks about her family, Aunt Lala, favorite movie, favorite color, her dislike of broccoli during snack time, and activities she likes to do. She talks about loving her mom, dad, and younger brother.

She shows them her love by giving each of them hugs, kisses, and a big smile before her dad and brother leave the school. She has told me about how her bedroom is her favorite color, purple. A couple of times we have discussed the instance when she, Aunt Lala, and I spent time together outside of school. I asked her where we ate and she responded with, "We ate at Chickfila in the mall." When asked about what the weather was like when we went she was able to remember that it was cold outside and that she wore her purple winter coat. She then told me about how we had fun playing with my orange cat after we ate. Olivia has also begun to make connections about how her dad, Aunt Lala, and I know each other. She has asked questions such as, "Do you, my daddy, and Aunt Lala work at the same restaurant?" In interactions such as these, she shows strengths in language in conversation and memory and knowledge. Ali presents different strengths in other contexts as well.

An activity Ali loves taking part in most days is art. A strength she possesses when completing art activities, are her fine motor skills. She is able to hold tools, such as brushes, colored pencils, or crayons, with her fingers. Therefore I would categorize Ali's fine motor skills as building in Measure 40 on the Physical Development Domain. The art activity she particularly enjoys participating in is painting. She typically starts with one color and uses the painting tools, such as brushes, magnets, or sponges. After using one color for some time with the painting instruments, she transitions to using a few colors and engages sense of touch by her fingers and hands. She enjoys mixing colors together to form other colors. When asked to describe the colors she is using, Ali is capable of telling me that she can mix red and blue to make purple. She also is aware that she can create the color green, by mixing blue and yellow. This shows some strength in the cause and effect area of cognitive development. Another instance in which she demonstrated her skills of cause and effect was when Ali was at a station with blue gloves and different colored lenses. She looked through a lens and explained that when she looked through a red lens, the blue glove looked purple. I have noticed that when asked to describe her painting she talks about the colors she has used but not certain shapes or things she has painted. I

believe that she only discusses the colors because by the time she has completed most of her paintings, they are usually all one color that has been formed by a variety of colors and has been spread across the paper by her fingers and hands. While using her fingers and hands to paint, she likes to paint up to her elbows and states that she has on long gloves so she can be like a princess. She enjoys painting on gloves for me as well. Some days when she paints on her gloves, she says she is Princess Olivia, Princess Aurora, or her favorite, Princess Elsa from *Frozen*. Ali enjoys singing “Let it Go” and dancing. When dancing, she shows her building of gross motor movement and balance by using simple dance moves and alternating feet when jumping. Another way in which I have viewed Ali’s strengths was through the use of a keyboard. During the travel theme week, Ali showed me how she could type her name and my name on a keyboard. While typing both of our names, she accurately hit each key, each letter of our names, and knew which letter made what sound. This showed her building of fine motor skills as well as her building of letter and word knowledge. A couple of weeks later, she remembered where each letter of her name was and was able to type it at a faster pace. Ali possesses strong skills in many domains of Desired Results Developmental Profile—Preschool©. To assist Ali in growing developmentally, using connection strategies is important.

Connection Strategies

In order to form a positive relationship with a child and help extend their learning, a variety of connection strategies can be used. I have known Ali’s dad for almost two years because we work together at a local restaurant. Before working at the Early Learning Center, I had only had a couple of interactions with Olivia and one of those interactions was the time we went to Chickfila and played with my cat afterwards. During our interaction at Chickfila, she did not speak to me as much as she did with her Aunt Lala because I had yet to form a relationship with her. Since starting at the Early Learning Center, I have been able to develop a relationship with Olivia by applying connection strategies I have learned.

One strategy I used to connect with Olivia was personalizing my interactions with her. One afternoon, I saw Ali by herself in the dramatic-play center. As I was walking over, I saw her picking out something to wear. When I reached the dramatic-play center, I said, "Hi Ali! I see that you are trying to find something to wear. What would you like to wear?" She looked up to me and smiled and responded with enthusiasm, "Hi teacher!! I think I want to wear this purple dress!" I noticed the tone of her voice and decided to match hers and spoke with a higher pitch and asked, "What do you like about the purple dress?!" Ali says, "Purple is my favorite color and this is a princess dress!" I asked her, "What princesses do you know?" After a minute or so, she told me about how she liked Princesses Aurora and Elsa and asked me if I liked them too. I told her that I have liked Princess Aurora since I was a kid. After I told her that I liked Aurora, she exclaimed, "We like the same princesses!!" In this situation with Ali, I was able to build a connection with her by personalizing my interaction by stating her name and changing the pitch and tone of my voice.

I have used listening as another connection strategy to form a better relationship with Ali. In my first self-reflection paper, I discussed how Olivia became flustered (face turned pink and speech slower than before) when she could not remove all of the paint from her hands and was certain that her dad was going to be mad at her because of this. A couple of weeks later, the same situation occurred. I interpreted that she was becoming flustered again. I kneeled down and looked her in her eyes and asked, "Ali, do you remember last time the paint would not come off of your hands?" She replied that she did. I then asked her, "Can you remind me about what we talked about?" In a slow manner she explained that she and Ms. Jessica would tell her daddy that she painted and the paint would not come off. While she explained this, I shook my head up and down and said "uh-huh" so that Ali knew I cared about what she was telling me. After she explained, I asked her, "Did your daddy get mad last time this happened?" She thought for a minute or two and then stated in a happy tone, "He didn't get mad!" I then said, "This time is a lot like last time because the paint will not come off of your hands. Because he

did not get mad last time, I bet he won't get mad this time either!" Ali smiled and said, "Thank you, Alex, you're my friend!" In this instance, I was able to get on Ali's level, reference a previous incident, gave her time to form her thoughts, and made sure she knew I cared about what she was saying.

Encouraging trust to continuously grow is a third connection strategy that I have used to help build a relationship with Olivia. One instance in which I was able to use this strategy was when Olivia had missed school one day because she was out sick with the stomach virus. The next time I was at the Early Learning Center I greeted her at her cubby and said, "Ali! I sure did miss you on Tuesday. Were you sick?" She proceeded to tell me that her tummy hurt and she threw up. I asked if she was feeling better and she said, "My tummy doesn't hurt anymore!" I told her, "I'm glad you feel better and I am excited that you are back at school today because I missed you when you were sick!" She immediately smiled and took my hand and led me to one of the centers. In this instance, I showed Ali that I had noticed her absence and that I cared that she was better and back at school.

Another occurrence in which I was able to build trust with Ali was when the class placed baking soda and vinegar in gloves and tied them up and they blew up like balloons. Each student was allowed to make two. Some of the children had placed their gloves in their cubbies and others were taking them and saying that the gloves were theirs. Ali pulled me aside and asked, "Alex, will you hold my gloves and don't give them to anyone please?" I responded, "Of course I will hold on to your gloves. Do you want to go play with something else?" She led us to another center and about after every eight minutes passed, she would ask, "Do you still have my gloves?" I showed her that I still had her gloves. Every time I showed her I still had her gloves, she would say, "Thank you, Alex!" In this situation I showed Ali that I will keep my promise and not give her gloves to any of the other children.