Ariel Nunez December 19th, 2013

Professor Pa Her

Child Psychology 2301

Being brought up in New York City I was constantly exposed to different cultures, people, and situations in which I had to learn how to handle and deal with because back then children were more inclined to play outside or explore their surroundings, rather than staying in and playing video games like most do now. Though technology is a great help and has come a long way since the 90’s, children have forgotten that they can have fun without it and it seems more and more babies are being born with the knowledge of how to work an iPad. As a kid every situation I was exposed to was a learning experience that built character or taught me values or morals and helped mold me into the person I am today. When deciding on what I could use to help teach and guide children into learning new words, skills, or thoughts I took a look at what I felt was missing from my community.

I currently live in Harlem which is slowly on the up and were many buildings and streets are being renovated but children are still not motivated to play or interact with one another outside of technology. Harlem has been through a lot of ups and downs, from the 1640’s influx of settlers to 1920’s end of World War 1, 1960’s Civil Rights movement, 1970s when Harlem reached a new low due to poverty and 1980’s Crack era which killed many people. Due to such dire circumstances of poverty and deaths many children had to grow up fast and only learn the basics so they could get a job to help support their families or flee to another city in search of better lives (Wikipedia-Harlem). Since education was not a necessity like money was, it was not stressed or focused on, which has now trickled its way into our present day. Recent Statistics from the NYC Department of Education has shown that the overall performance grade from 2012-2013 is a C for Elementary and middle schools in Harlem which was in sync with the previous year’s B and 2011’s C (Wikipedia-Harlem). When a closer look is taken at the report, we see that the students’ performance and environment is an average A for most years, but what is lacking is the students’ progress (Nyc.gov). This is stating that children are becoming complacent once they reach a certain degree of knowledge, and are not being motivated to push past it. When it comes to teaching children there are many ways to approach it, but I believe that starting early and through repetition and reinforcement, a higher success rate is possible.

My idea to use Family Activity Sheet like the ones they give kids at restaurants to color in, is a good way to expose young children to use their brains to solve problems. With more emphasize on learning then coloring, this Sheet will use games to help Condition young minds to learn different words or problem solving techniques. I believe that kids are more likely to learn something if they are having fun, so by using games as a cover-up for educational purposes they will want to fill-out the pamphlet besides being motivated by a randomized reward they get for completing it correctly. This form of teaching of behavioral and social learning approach can be categorized as Skinners Operant Conditioning along with a combination of Habituation and Scaffolding (simplypsychology.org).

Operant Conditioning is the process in were a specific behavior modification is either increased or decreased through positive or negative reinforcement, while Habituation is learning through repetition and Scaffolding is elaborating through comparison with words (dictionary). Skinner believed that by Operant Conditioning, people could be taught to execute certain acts so with his own version of the Thorndike’s box, called the Skinner Box, he placed animals in a cage were they had a button for food or water. The animals would be motivated to press the button because the reinforcement reward would be the food or water that came after the action of pressing the button. Trial after trial this experiment started to show that the animals were learning to associate the button with food, so they responded quicker when put in the cage. Another experiment that helped prove Operant Conditioning was the Head Turn Task in which babies were reinforced with stimuli or praise when correctly spotting a change within a consistent sound by redirecting their attention. (simplypsychology.org)

My Activity Sheet will slowly help young kids from the ages of 6-9 years old with building their vocabulary and enabling them to express their creative side by coloring with supplied crayons in that section. The arts play a large role for children because it is a form of release that helps get out feeling, thoughts, or ideas. Some examples of games that will be on my activity sheet is a cross-word puzzle in which they are stimulated to search for the missing word, which will expose them to new vocabulary or familiarize them with the letters that make up a certain word. A problem solving puzzle will also get them thinking of different strategies they can use to obtain the desired result, while an old school hangman puzzle will push them to discover new concepts. Math problems and other subjects will be featured on the Pamphlet and when they are done with it, a restaurant representative will check it and give out the reward if chosen.

There will be one Activity Sheet to start off with but if this method works, different versions will be developed ranging from easy to hardest but the harder they are the better the prize will be. The prizes would range in coupon prizes that will encourage the family to come back. I believe that this frequent activity will get young kids to like learning more and certainly help bring up their education level. The early exposure will have them ready for school while the randomized reinforcement reward will get them to do the work. I can also speak from experience because when I was in elementary school I attended an after school program called Score were they taught kids and for every correctly completed assignment you were giving a small square magnet that when accumulated there were different things you could buy. This action of receiving the reward for completing my work correctly, pushed me to work harder because I wanted the big prize that required a lot of magnets and in turn actually ended up teaching me and bringing up my grades.

Works Cited

1) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\_of\_Harlem

2) http://www.thefreedictionary.com/operant+conditioning

3) http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/05/M284/AboutUs/Statistics/default.htm

4) http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html