

**ECE 410 Commentary Essay**

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Amelia is a vibrant and imaginative five-year-old who attends Kinder Island, a nurturing, play-based preschool. Over several weeks of observation, I have come to understand Amelia's unique personality, behaviors, and developmental progress. This paper provides a comprehensive profile of Amelia by detailing her appearance, background, and classroom interactions. It also analyzes her physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, proposing strategies to help Amelia succeed in her learning environment. These strategies integrate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and intentional scaffolding to ensure individualized instruction that supports Amelia's unique needs and fosters her growth.

Amelia is a tall, slightly chubby child with an unmistakable presence. She has medium-length wavy brown hair, often styled in creative ways, such as braids, ponytails, or loose waves adorned with colorful bows and clips. Her ocean-blue eyes are striking and filled with curiosity, beautifully complementing her pale skin, which is lightly dusted with freckles. Amelia's pointed nose, medium lips, and expressive face vividly convey her emotions. She is known for wearing stylish, expensive-looking outfits, ranging from sparkly dresses to coordinated ensembles featuring her favorite colors, often accessorized with matching shoes and jewelry. Her polished appearance reflects her family's care and attention to nurturing her confidence and individuality.

Amelia comes from a bilingual, multicultural family. Her mother is Albanian-American, and her father is from Montenegro, which has exposed Amelia to a blend of traditions, languages, and

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customs. At home, Amelia is surrounded by Albanian, Montenegrin, and English, though English is her dominant language. She often incorporates Albanian phrases like \**“të dua”*\* (“I love you”) into her speech, which highlights her connection to her cultural roots. Her family highly values education and self-expression, which is evident in her approach to learning and social interactions. However, Amelia is also navigating a significant life transition as her mother is expecting a baby. While she often expresses excitement about becoming a big sister, moments of clinginess and requests for reassurance suggest that this change is emotionally impactful.

Addressing her emotional needs during this adjustment is essential to her well-being and classroom success.

Amelia thrives in creative, hands-on activities and excels in tasks such as solving puzzles, drawing, and dramatic play. During free play, she meticulously organizes puzzle pieces by color and shape before completing them with ease. Her favorite activity is dramatic play, where she uses dolls and costumes to craft imaginative narratives involving adventures and problem-solving. These activities showcase her advanced cognitive and fine motor skills, as well as her creativity. However, Amelia occasionally struggles with patience and turn-taking during group activities. For instance, she has a habit of interrupting during storytime or pushing ahead during transitions like lining up for outdoor play. These behaviors appear to stem from her eagerness to participate rather than defiance. Addressing these challenges with intentional scaffolding and supportive strategies can help Amelia develop emotional regulation and cooperative social skills.

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Kinder Island provides a vibrant, play-based learning environment that fosters creativity, exploration, and collaboration. The classroom is organized into designated areas for activities like reading, dramatic play, art, and sensory exploration. Amelia gravitates toward the art corner, where she enjoys molding Play-Doh, creating collages, and experimenting with colors. With a student-to-teacher ratio of 6:1, the classroom provides consistent support for individualized attention. While Amelia enjoys the collaborative atmosphere, she occasionally seeks reassurance from her teachers when she feels uncertain or overwhelmed. This highlights the importance of intentional teaching strategies to support her needs, as described by Boat, Dinnebeil, and Bae (2003), who emphasize the significance of individualized instruction in inclusive classrooms.

One effective strategy to support Amelia is using visual cues and schedules, a key principle of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Visual supports, such as a pictorial daily schedule, help children anticipate transitions and reduce anxiety (CAST, 2018). Amelia struggles with transitioning between activities, such as moving to nap time or lining up. A visual schedule provides a clear structure, supporting her emotional needs and helping her feel secure. A laminated schedule featuring images of snack time, circle time, and nap time could be displayed at Amelia's eye level. Before each transition, I would guide her to the schedule, reinforcing what's coming next and encouraging her independence in following the routine.

A second strategy involves intentional modeling to support Amelia's learning. Boat, Dinnebeil, and Bae (2003) highlight the importance of modeling as an effective way to scaffold learning by demonstrating skills or behaviors for children to replicate. Amelia learns best through observation and hands-on activities, making modeling an excellent tool to enhance her

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problem-solving and fine motor skills. During free play, I would model sorting puzzle pieces by color and edge shape to guide Amelia's problem-solving strategies. As she becomes comfortable, I would encourage her to apply these techniques independently, offering verbal reinforcement as needed.

To support Amelia's language and literacy development, story reenactments offer a meaningful way to build vocabulary and narrative skills. According to Smith (2020), reenacting stories creates contextual opportunities for children to use and expand their language. Amelia's love for dramatic play makes this approach engaging and effective. After reading a story, I would invite Amelia and her peers to act out the narrative using costumes and props. For example, in a story about animals, Amelia could role-play as her favorite character, enhancing her comprehension and expression.

To improve Amelia's socialization skills, cooperative games provide an effective scaffold. Games like "Simon Says" or group block-building encourage turn-taking and teamwork while fostering patience (Brown, 2021). Amelia struggles with patience during group activities, making these games a suitable intervention. I would organize group games where children work toward a shared goal, such as building a tower. Positive reinforcement, such as verbal praise or stickers for waiting her turn, would encourage Amelia to practice these skills.

Finally, sensory breaks provide Amelia with opportunities to regulate her emotions and energy levels. Sensory breaks offer calming activities that allow children to refocus during moments of overstimulation (Lee, 2022). Amelia's energetic nature sometimes overwhelms her, making

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sensory breaks an essential tool for self-regulation. I would create a quiet corner with sensory tools like fidget toys, stress balls, and a weighted lap pad. Encouraging Amelia to use this space during moments of frustration would empower her to manage her emotions independently.

Amelia is a bright, creative, and energetic child who brings enthusiasm and curiosity to every activity she participates in. While she faces challenges with patience and transitions, thoughtful strategies like visual schedules, cooperative games, and sensory breaks can help her thrive.

Supporting her growth requires recognizing her strengths, respecting her individuality, and providing a nurturing environment where she feels secure and valued. Intentional teaching, as described by Boat, Dinnebeil, and Bae (2003), is central to fostering meaningful learning experiences for children like Amelia. With these supports, Amelia will continue to excel academically, socially, and emotionally, ensuring a successful transition to kindergarten and beyond.

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