

Engagement Study

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CYCP 119: Holistic Practice

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Cast Study Chosen: Kiera

(Week One Day One from Field Practicum)

Kiera is 4 years old, she lives with her mom, dad, and new baby brother Kaden. She is experiencing separation anxiety at school. She is always seen smiling and playing with her friends once she is settled and her parents have left her sight. When adults try to engage with her she cries and says she wants her mom and dad.

You have walked into her JK classroom on your first day of placement. You have been tasked with working with her throughout the day. You have been briefed on the above noted points of her case study. That is all you know and you are sent on your way to interact with the class and keep your focus on Kiera.

The class is a bustling and busy room. There are students engaged in many activities throughout the space and some are still getting things from their backpacks as boots and snow pants are seemingly everywhere. Suddenly you hear the teacher say "to infinity..." and every student stops and replies "and beyond!". Instantly, there is dead silence and every student is looking at the teacher. She instructs everyone to join her on the carpet. Students stop what they are doing and make their way to the alphabet carpet in the middle of the room. You notice Kiera making her way to the carpet holding a friend's hand and they all sit in a perfect circle.

The class is taught a lesson about teamwork and problem solving. They talk about the importance of communication and asking questions. The teacher provides examples. The students are each given 15 pieces of lego. They are asked to complete an activity building a lego tower with a partner both sharing their lego pieces to work together on the task.

You look over at Kiera who's friend has joined with another child in the class. Kiera now has no partner and is sitting alone on the carpet not participating in the class. The teacher looks at you to approach her.

You are prepared for her to cry, which she does as she sees you approach. She says she wants her mom and dad before you say your first word to her.

1. Background Information:

Name: Kiera

Age: 4

Interests: Kiera enjoys playing with her classmates and building with LEGO. Once she feels comfortable, she's happy to join classroom activities and spend time with her friends. These interests can be used to help her feel safe and encourage her to participate after arriving at school.

Strengths: Kiera is a friendly and social child once she settles into the classroom. She enjoys working and playing with other children and is able to participate in classroom activities when she feels comfortable. She also responds well to familiar routines and enjoys learning through play.

Challenges: Kiera experiences separation anxiety when she arrives at school. She becomes upset when her parents leave and often cries, saying she wants her mom and dad. She also finds it difficult to interact with unfamiliar adults, making it harder to build new relationships at first.

2. SMART Goals:

Short-Term Goal:

Goal statement: Within the next 4 weeks, Kiera will use one calming strategy, such as taking deep breaths or holding a comfort item, before joining a classroom activity with support from me on 4 out of 5 school days.		
Resources and strategies (3-5) • Morning check-ins • Positive praise • Comfort items	Date Within 4 weeks	Evidence of accomplishment • Fewer tears during morning drop off • Joins activities sooner • More comfortable while joining activities
Barriers and how to support: Kiera may still feel overwhelmed when her parents leave or be hesitant to interact with me because I'm new. I'll stay patient, give her time, validate her feelings, and stick to a consistent morning routine so she knows what to expect.		

Long-Term Goal:

Goal statement: Within 3 months, Kiera will transition into the classroom and join a classroom activity with minimal support and no tears on 4 out of 5 days of the school week.		
Resources and strategies (3-5) • Visual schedule • Morning routine • Positive reinforcement	Date In 3 months	Evidence of accomplishment • Enters classroom confidently • Participates independently • Weekly observations and feedback from CYC and teacher
Barriers and how to support: There may still be mornings where Kiera has a difficult time separating from her parents. If this happens, I'll continue using the same routine, offer reassurance, and slowly reduce my support as she becomes more confident.		

3. Strategies:

Positive Reinforcement:

Implementation: I will praise Kiera whenever she takes a small step, like talking to me, joining an activity, or trying a calming strategy. I'll make my praise specific, so she knows exactly what she did well, for example, "I really liked how you joined the LEGO activity today and I'm very proud of you."

Clear Expectations:

Implementation: I'll explain what we're going to do using simple language that matches Kiera's age. Before moving to a new activity, I'll let her know what's coming next and remind her that I'll be there to help if she needs me.

Active Listening:

Implementation: When Kiera tells me she wants her mom and dad, I won't rush to distract her. I'll let her know it's okay to miss them by saying something like, "I know you miss your mom and dad. It's okay to feel sad." Once she feels heard, I'll gently encourage her to join me in an activity she enjoys. I will reassure her that her parents will be here at the end of the day to pick her up.

Choice and Autonomy:

Implementation: I'll give Kiera simple choices throughout the day, like whether she'd like to play with LEGO, colour, or read a book first. Giving her choices helps her feel like she has some control during a time that feels overwhelming.

Modelling Behaviour:

Implementation: I'll stay calm and use a positive, reassuring voice when talking with Kiera. I'll model friendly interactions with other children and show her how to ask someone to play or join an activity if she's unsure.

4. Implementation Plan:

As Kiera's Child and Youth Care Practitioner, my main focus will be helping her feel safe and comfortable at school by building a positive relationship with her. Every morning, I'll greet her with a smile and let her know I'm there if she needs me. If she's upset after her parents leave, I'll listen to how she's feeling and reassure her before inviting her to do something she enjoys, like building with LEGO or playing with her classmates. Throughout the day, I'll encourage her and celebrate the small wins, like talking to me, joining an activity, or trying something new. I'll also keep things as consistent as possible by using simple routines, visual reminders, and giving her choices so she feels more in control. I'll use resources like a visual schedule, calming activities, classroom toys, and work closely with her teacher and parents so we're all supporting Kiera in the same way.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation:

I'll keep track of Kiera's progress by making daily notes about how she handles morning drop-off, how long it takes her to settle, and how comfortable she is joining classroom activities. I'll also talk with her teacher regularly to see if she's becoming more confident throughout the day and check in with her parents to see if they've noticed any changes. If Kiera is making progress, I'll slowly step

back and encourage her to do more on her own. If she's still having a hard time, I'll try different calming strategies, spend more time building our relationship, and adjust the plan to better meet her needs.

References

Gaudaur, A. (2026). *Week 1, Day 1: Case study*. Field Practicum, Centennial College.
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