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For over three decades, *Adapting Early Childhood Curricula for Children with Special Needs* has educated the next generation of teachers not only here in California, but also throughout the nation. It provides a foundation for professionals seeking a career working with children with disabilities whether in general education, inclusive, or special education classrooms. When I reach into my bag and take out this book during a coaching session, I am not surprised, as I’ve heard it often, when teachers say, “I love that book.” They frequently explain that their edition is older, highlighted throughout, and dog-eared. We laugh and then turn to a page that reminds us of a specific practice that could help support a child in need. This text and I have a long and productive history, as I have utilized it throughout my professional career as a student, inclusion trainer, and professor.

When I was a student, this text was the foundation for many of my classes while securing my early childhood special education credentials, completing an internship, and obtaining a special education master’s degree. The text went everywhere with me, living as it did in the trunk of my car because I never knew when I was going to need it. I would refer to the book often in my special education classroom to remind me about the characteristics of disabilities and how to implement task analysis and make adaptations to my curriculum. I would pull it out to find evidence in support of my college reports and to discuss concepts and collaboration techniques with coworkers, colleagues, and fellow college students. After I left the classroom as a student, the text did not just sit on my shelf. It came with me and found a new home in my office.

As an inclusion training specialist and coach, I used this text as a resource for evidence-based practices that were incorporated into trainings for general and special education teachers. From the concepts of this foundational book, support materials were created to accompany trainings for teachers, coaches, and families. Now as a professor, I use this text along with the helpful online supports and the Instructor’s Manual to guide the next generation of early childhood special educators. I know that college students will receive comprehensive information from this text to support both children and families, as every edition is up-to-date with the latest legislation and trends as well as evidence-based practice.

This one example of a career path shows the exponential influence that *Adapting Early Childhood Curricula for Children with Special Needs* has had—moving beyond serving the small number of students and families in a special education classroom to teaching college students who are using this text to make a difference in the lives of ALL their children and families.

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Preface

This book is written with you, the student of either early childhood or special education, in mind. Whether you are studying to become a teacher of young children with disabilities or are an early interventionist with a related background who wishes to develop greater versatility in your chosen field, we have designed this to be an easy-to-read, interesting, and comprehensive resource for you. It provides extensive use of examples, dialogues, practical illustrations, and vignettes, and a focus on the best practices in the field.

When this text was originally published, intervention with young children with disabilities was in its formative years. Since that time the field has expanded, and this book has successfully grown with it. Young children with disabilities are now enrolled in a variety of settings and are served by professionals and paraprofessionals with diverse backgrounds. Our objective now, as it was in the first nine editions, is to present a text that will play a major role in the development of all who serve young children. The focus is on the skills necessary to assist infants, young children, and their families to meet their special challenges and develop to their fullest potential.

Distinguishing Features

This book has four main strengths that make it a compelling self-teaching resource:

1. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the natures of all young children and how they learn. Adapting curricula and intervention approaches for children with disabilities works effectively only when professionals build on a strong foundation of understanding what is common to all young children. On the basis of this necessary foundation, students can consider strategies for meeting the developmental and educational needs of infants and young children who have disabilities or who experienced circumstances and conditions that potentially interfere with optimal growth and adjustment.

2. The approach taken in this text stresses the absolute necessity of understanding young children within the context of the family. Every family is unique and complex, reflecting the many influences of history, culture or ethnicity, economics, and family dynamics. Early interventionists must focus not on the detailed analysis of these many factors, but on ways of supporting families that will maximize their day-to-day fulfillment as caregivers of their young children. As explained in the text, your job, in part, is to help parents develop a sense of competence in their own abilities to nurture their children regardless of family circumstances. Appreciation of families’ roles in the development of children and respect for families’ concerns and priorities are critical to effective curriculum design and program development.

3. A significant portion of the text is organized according to traditional developmental domains: social-emotional, motor, communication, and cognitive skills. As an early childhood special education professional, you will seek to develop these growth areas in the children entrusted to you. Thus, you must develop a thorough understanding of each of these complex domains.

4. Finally, you must ultimately understand that all the growth areas and individual and family background factors must be synthesized into a view of the whole child. As in any other form of synergy, the whole child is much greater than the sum of his or her parts. This holistic view relates directly to the book’s emphasis on activity-based and play-based approaches to intervention. You will learn how to integrate goals and objectives for all domains into developmentally appropriate and motivating activities in inclusive, community-based settings. You will also learn how to work collaboratively with others in inclusive community-based settings in an itinerant consultation role. Throughout, best practices are explained for home, center, or classroom application.

The four points just mentioned suggest the framework and approach that have consistently made this book appealing to readers of nine previous editions. They have been time tested and consistently found to be helpful.

New in This Edition

- Throughout the text, short video examples are available in the enhanced Pearson eText to further explain key concepts.
- Issues related to collaborating with families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, teaching dual-language learners, and the influence of poverty are embedded in many chapters.
- Evidence-based practices were updated based on the most current research available.
- Activities to encourage reflection and application of topics and strategies are provided at the end of each chapter.
- The glossary has been updated with relevant terms and definitions for new topics covered in the chapters.
• The appendix includes a new graphic illustrating the roles and responsibilities of special education staff in relation to general education staff within inclusive settings.

Organization

The text opens with a presentation of our philosophy for working with children who have disabilities. It explores human likenesses and value differences and discusses our belief in the importance of providing services in the most normalized settings possible. Chapter 1 highlights the historical contributions of the fields of early childhood education and special education. Important features and implications of Public Laws 94-142, 99-457, 101-336, 101-476, 102-119, 105-17, 108-446, 110-134, and 110-335 are summarized. Attention is given to the continual collaboration between professional groups involved in early childhood special education, especially the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Evolving trends in the field and alternative approaches to service delivery including the unique challenges involved in supporting inclusion are discussed. Key findings from research on preschool inclusion and the necessity of using person first language are highlighted. Finally, the challenges presented by those who are dual-language learners and the increasing number of children living in poverty receive consideration.

Chapter 2 explores the process involved in the adjustment required to successfully parent a child with disabilities. It presents techniques to involve families in a collaborative partnership with the variety of professionals with whom they must interface. In developing a family-focused approach, students are encouraged to view families from a systems perspective. Special attention is given to the various methods of parent involvement that can accommodate cultural diversity, language differences, and unique family situations. The complexities involved in developing a truly collaborative relationship with parents are examined in greater detail in this edition. Additional suggestions on how to successfully involve fathers have also been included.

Within Chapter 3, the importance of becoming a skilled observer of children is stressed as students are encouraged to link curriculum to assessment and the monitoring of progress. The components of individualized family service plans (IFSPs) and individualized education programs (IEPs) are discussed in detail, while techniques for writing goals and objectives are illustrated. New to this edition are suggestions on how to make outcome statements on IFSPs more functional. Readers are also introduced to Robert McWilliam’s unique approach to truly understanding the needs of families.

Strategies for collaborative programming and transition planning are outlined. Chapter 4 focuses on curriculum development within a framework of generic instructional strategies and introduces the principles of the Universal Design for Learning. Communicative interactions, facilitation of play, the development of appropriate schedules, and optimal environmental arrangements contribute to the success of early intervention. Chapter 5 focuses on considerations and strategies for teaching young children with specific disabilities, including those with low incidence and multiple disabilities, autism, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The chapter also now includes a series of questions to promote collaboration with support specialists such as speech and language pathologists. Additional topics include assistive technology, functional vision assessments, and learning media assessments.

Chapter 6 begins by describing the stages of psychosocial development as a precursor to understanding how to facilitate social skills through the medium of play. Considerable attention is given to helping children who experience particular emotional and behavioral challenges resulting from adverse childhood experiences. The use of positive behavioral supports is discussed in detail.

After describing the sequence of typical development of gross and fine motor skills, Chapter 7 examines atypical motor development, the assessment of motor skills, and techniques for collaborating with physical and occupational therapists. Practical intervention strategies are offered, including handling and positioning guidelines, as well as techniques for facilitating self-care skills and encouraging healthy diets. The role of movement education and music in the development of motor skills is considered.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the development of communication, literacy, and cognitive skills. The importance of caregiver-child interactions and the role of play in optimal development are recognized throughout. Special attention is devoted to specific strategies for enhancing communication skills in children with severe disabilities, autism, visual impairments, and hearing impairments. Consideration is given to young dual-language learners. The section devoted to understanding the social and linguistic factors related to children’s emergent literacy skills and strategies for encouraging these skills is a valuable resource. Facilitation of phonological and phonemic awareness along with a brief synthesis of pre-math skills is included in this section.

The final chapter provides an overview of models, strategies, and challenges for providing inclusion support to young children with disabilities who are included in community-based early childhood settings. Consideration is now also given to transitional kindergarten, which is new to some communities. This chapter goes into depth on how to facilitate the collaboration and problem solving so necessary to the shared decision making necessary to success in early childhood special education. Productive teaming with the
many specialists and paraprofessionals is essential to effective facilitation of the development of young children with disabilities.

As in previous editions, the appendices include a wealth of practical information, such as developmental guidelines, curricular adaptations for children with specific needs, modifications, and checklists to assist facilitation of inclusion. A sequence of steps for milieu approaches is included. New to this edition is an example of the roles and responsibilities of special education staff as related to general education staff in inclusive educational settings. Finally, the appendix includes a list of competencies that we hope each and every reader will develop as a result of studying this text.
Acknowledgments

We present this book with gratitude to the hundreds of children and parents who have been our teachers. From them we have learned to value and nurture the uniqueness of each child regardless of background, skills, or abilities. We believe we have found a way to meet children’s unique needs in whatever setting they appear. It has been our purpose to convey the essence of this process to anyone interested in working with young children.

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Adapting Early Childhood Curricula for Children with Special Needs

Tenth Edition