When I ask my colleagues in early childhood education how I can help them be better professionals, their answers are always the same: They want an early childhood textbook that is user-friendly and applies theory to practice. *Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education*, Seventh Edition, is a textbook that is practical, is based on current research and thinking about how young children learn, and provides concrete classroom examples for how to teach children from birth to age eight.

As you, other early childhood professionals, and the public respond to the changing field of early childhood education, more opportunities arise for new programs, curricula, and appropriate practices to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families. This textbook is designed to develop competent and confident early childhood education professionals, prepared to assume their professional roles in the ever-changing world of early childhood education.

**WHAT’S NEW IN THIS EDITION?**

Students and professors will benefit from new content and features in this seventh edition:

- Videos embedded in the Pearson eText link you directly to illustrations of children’s development and learning, teaching strategies, views of early childhood classrooms, and many more insights into high-quality teaching practices. Look for the play button in the margins to link directly from your Pearson eText to a video that exemplifies, models, or expands upon chapter concepts. Some of these videos also appear in the exercises in MyEducationLab™ for *Introduction to Early Childhood Education*, but many do not.

- A new feature, *Applying Research to Teaching*, examines research to inform specific teaching practices.

- *Teaching and Learning in the Inclusive Classroom*, a new section in each chapter, addresses teaching practices in inclusive environments.

- Fifty percent of the book's content is new to reflect the following important changes occurring in early childhood education today:
  - Teaching with and to the Common Core Standards (CCS)
  - Recent changes in the field influencing the care and education of young children, including new research about children’s development and supporting their learning and the changing roles and responsibilities of early childhood professionals
  - The politicization of the field, reflected in the use of early childhood education by politicians to implement national policies regarding the importance of a highly trained and educated workforce of the future, and the accountability surrounding it
  - A growing emphasis on accommodating children with diverse needs, reflecting the increasingly diverse early childhood population and the growing number of children with disabilities
  - The increasing integration of technology in instructional processes
  - Programs and curricula that are increasingly environmentally friendly
• Seventy-five percent of the research is new or updated.
• In response to reviewers’ comments, core content examples and illustrations have been increased and extended to make this seventh edition more practical and applied.
• An updated and redesigned Study Plan on MyEducationLab™ provides a practice multiple-choice quiz, enrichment exercises to scaffold learning and increase achievement, and a posttest multiple-choice quiz. See the MyEducationLab™ section for more details about the Study Plan.

FEATURES AND THEIR PURPOSES

The many features in this text were developed with a pedagogical purpose and content focus. They include:

• **Learning Outcomes.** These are written to organize the chapter content in advance of reading it and to provide an overview of what you will be expected to know and be able to do after reading the chapter. Review these carefully before you read the chapter, and review them again after you’ve read the chapter. Also, look over and try to answer or complete the Activities for Professional Development at the end of the chapter, which are written to reinforce what you learned in each section of the chapter and are aligned with the Learning Outcomes.

• **Professionalism in Practice.** Written by experienced teachers and administrators of early childhood programs, these features give you insight into their professional philosophies and behaviors. Many of these are labeled as Competency Builders, which include step-by-step strategies, guidelines, or steps to walk students through the details of key tasks expected of them, such as observation, lesson planning, and creating a multicultural classroom. They help students begin building professional competencies in their work with children and families.

• **Diversity Tie-In.** Includes a variety of topics to create an awareness of the uniqueness and diversity of all children and families.

• **Technology Tie-In.** Includes specific examples of technology use linked to chapter content. Helps future teachers become technologically literate, understand the options available, and use them to their fullest extent to teach, communicate with parents, and manage a classroom.

• **Portraits of Children.** To familiarize students with developmental capabilities of children in each age group in the early childhood age range and to become sensitive to universality and diversity in child development, these features put a spotlight on several children in an age range in the Infant and Toddler chapter, the Preschool chapter, the Kindergarten chapter, and the Primary Grades chapter. Photos of children, a list of their capabilities and interests by domain, and questions about developmentally appropriate practice get students thinking about individual needs and approaches and applications to address those needs.

• **Ethical Dilemmas.** Scenarios help readers learn to make important professional decisions based on NAEYC’s Code of Ethical Conduct.
• **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.** Included in the appendix, this document introduces students to the profession’s recommendations and expectations.

• **Correlation to NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Practice.** The inside cover of the book includes a helpful matrix linking the text’s content to the NAEYC Standards. In addition, every chapter-opening page includes the standard or standards relevant to that chapter’s topic and what they mean for teachers. This reinforces for students what is expected of them in their work with children, families, and communities.

**MyEducationLab™**

MyEducationLab™ is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment product designed to improve results by helping students quickly master concepts and by providing educators with a robust set of tools for easily gauging and addressing the performance of individuals and classrooms.

MyEducationLab™ engages students with high-quality multimedia learning experiences that help them build critical teaching skills and prepare them for real-world practice. In practice exercises, students receive immediate feedback so they see mistakes right away, learn precisely which concepts are holding them back, and master concepts through targeted practice.

For educators, MyEducationLab™ provides highly visual data and performance analysis to help them quickly identify gaps in student learning and make a clear connection between coursework, concept mastery, and national teaching standards. And because MyEducationLab™ comes from Pearson, it’s developed by an experienced partner committed to providing content, resources, and expertise for the best digital learning experiences.

In *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*, Linda Darling-Hammond and her colleagues point out that grounding teacher education in real classrooms—among real teachers and students and among actual examples of students’ and teachers’ work—is an important and perhaps even an essential part of training teachers for the complexities of teaching in today’s classrooms.

In the MyEducationLab™ for this course, educators will find the following features and resources.

**Advanced Data and Performance Reporting Aligned to National Standards**

Advanced data and performance reporting helps educators quickly identify gaps in student learning and make a clear connection between coursework, concept mastery, and national teaching standards with highly visual views of performance reports. Data and assessments align directly to national teaching standards, including NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, and support reporting for state and accreditation requirements.

**Study Plan Specific to Your Text**

MyEducationLab™ gives students the opportunity to test themselves on key concepts and skills, track their own progress through the course, and access personalized Study Plan activities.
The customized Study Plan is generated based on students’ pretest results. Incorrect questions from the pretest indicate specific textbook learning outcomes the student is struggling with. The customized Study Plan suggests specific enriching activities for particular learning outcomes, helping students focus. Personalized Study Plan activities may include eBook reading assignments and review, practice, and enrichment activities.

After students complete the enrichment activities, they take a posttest to see the concepts they’ve mastered or areas where they still may need extra help. MyEducationLab then reports the Study Plan results to the instructor. Based on these reports, the instructor can adapt course material to suit the needs of individual students or the entire class.

Assignments and Activities
Designed to enhance students’ understanding of concepts covered in class, these assignable exercises show concepts in action (through videos, cases, and/or student and teacher artifacts). They help students deepen content knowledge and synthesize and apply concepts and strategies they have read about in the book. (Correct answers for these assignments are available to the instructor only.)

Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions
These unique learning units help students practice and strengthen skills that are essential to effective teaching. After examining the steps involved in a core teaching process, students are given an opportunity to practice applying this skill via videos, student and teacher artifacts, and/or case studies of authentic classrooms. Providing multiple opportunities to practice a single teaching concept, each activity encourages a deeper understanding and application of concepts, as well as the use of critical thinking skills. After practice, students take a quiz that is reported to the instructor gradebook and performance reporting.

IRIS Center Resources
The IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University (http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu), funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), develops training enhancement materials for preservice and practicing teachers. The Center works with experts from across the country to create challenge-based interactive modules, case study units, and podcasts that provide research-validated information about working with students in inclusive settings. In your MyEducationLab™ course we have integrated this content where appropriate.

Teacher Talk
This feature emphasizes the power of teaching through videos of master teachers, who tell their compelling stories of why they teach. Each of these featured teachers has been awarded the Council of Chief State School Officers Teacher of the Year award, the oldest and most prestigious award for teachers.

CONNECT Modules
Learn about practices to solve dilemmas in early childhood settings. Videos, activities, and narratives will guide you through a process to learn about serving children with disabilities effectively. These modules are created by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, which has partnered with Pearson in providing these modules for student use.
Course Resources

The Course Resources section of MyEducationLab™ is designed to help students put together an effective lesson plan, prepare for and begin a career, navigate the first year of teaching, and understand key educational standards, policies, and laws.

The Course Resources section includes the following:

- **The Lesson Plan Builder** is an effective and easy-to-use tool that students can use to create, update, and share quality lesson plans. The software also makes it easy to integrate state content standards into any lesson plan.

- **The Certification and Licensure** section is designed to help students pass licensure exams by giving them access to state test requirements, overviews of what tests cover, and sample test items.

The Certification and Licensure section includes the following:

- **State Certification Test Requirements**: Here, students can click on a state and be taken to a list of state certification tests.

- Students can click on the **Licensure Exams** they need to take to find:
  - Basic information about each test
  - Descriptions of what is covered on each test
  - Sample test questions with explanations of correct answers

- **National Evaluation Series™** by Pearson: Here, students can see the tests in the NES, learn what is covered on each exam, and access sample test items with descriptions and rationales of correct answers. Students can also purchase interactive online tutorials developed by Pearson Evaluation Systems and the Pearson Teacher Education and Development group.

- **ETS Online Praxis Tutorials**: Here, students can purchase interactive online tutorials developed by ETS and by the Pearson Teacher Education and Development group. Tutorials are available for the Praxis I exams and for select Praxis II exams.

- The **Licensure and Standards** section provides access to current state and national standards.

- The **Preparing a Portfolio** section provides guidelines for creating a high-quality teaching portfolio.

- **Beginning Your Career** offers tips, advice, and other valuable information:
  - **Resume Writing and Interviewing**: Includes expert advice on how to write impressive resumes and prepare for job interviews.
  - **Your First Year of Teaching**: Provides practical tips to set up a first classroom, manage student behavior, and more easily organize for instruction and assessment.
  - **Law and Public Policies**: Details specific directives and requirements needed to understand the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

- The **Multimedia Index** aggregates resources in MyEducationLab™ by asset type (e.g., video or artifact) for easy location and retrieval.

*Visit www.myeducationlab.com for a demonstration of this exciting new online teaching resource.*
NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation

Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
I am grounded in a child development knowledge base. I use my understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.1

Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships
I understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children’s families and communities. I know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children’s families and communities. I use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children’s development and learning.2

Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families
I understand that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals. I know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. I know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence the development of each child.3

Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families
I understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and its details vary depending on children’s ages, characteristics, and the settings within which teaching and learning occur. I understand and use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation for my work with young children and families. I know, understand, and use a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies, and tools to connect with children and families and positively influence each child’s development and learning.4

Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum
I use my knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for each and every young child. I understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in an early childhood curriculum. I know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen my understanding. I use my own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula that promote comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.5

Standard 6. Becoming a Professional
I identify and conduct myself as a member of the early childhood profession. I know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. I am a continuous, collaborative learner who demonstrates knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on my work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. I am an informed advocate for sound educational practices and policies.6

Maria Cardenas is excited about her new assignment as a pre-kindergarten teacher. After years of study and serving as an assistant teacher, Maria now has her own classroom of three- and four-year-old children. “I can’t believe this day has finally come! I’ve worked so hard, and now my dream has come true! I can’t wait to get started! I want my children to learn and be all they can be!”

Maria did not become a teacher overnight. She spent two years at a local community college and three at my university, learning the content, pedagogical, and...
professorial knowledge and dispositions necessary to be a highly qualified early childhood teacher. There was never any doubt in Maria’s mind or mine that she would achieve her goals! I first met Maria as her faculty advisor when she entered my university teacher education program. From the beginning, Maria was enthusiastic about her career choice and determined that she would be a high-quality professional. In addition to all of her coursework, Maria volunteered in many community and school-based programs to get the experiences she needed to help her prepare for the day when she would have her “own” classroom. After five years of going to school part-time, Maria is ready to make a difference in the lives of “her” children. I hope you are as excited as Maria about your opportunity to teach young children!

Today, more than ever, the public and politicians all over the world are creating a lot of excitement by seeking ways to improve the quality of early childhood education and teaching. As a result, you have a wonderful opportunity to work with young children and their families, develop new and better programs, and advocate for better practices and high-quality programs. Like Maria, you can be a leader in helping the early childhood profession make high-quality education a reality for all children.

WHO IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL?

Early childhood professionals promote child development and learning; build family and community relationships; observe, document, and assess to support young children and families; promote positive teaching and learning for young children; and identify with and conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession.

You are preparing to be an early childhood professional; a person who successfully teaches all children (birth to age eight), promotes high personal standards, and continually expands his or her skills and knowledge. You will teach all children and develop supportive relationships with them to help assure that each child can achieve and be successful. For example, National Teacher of the Year Michelle Shearer promotes high-quality teaching based on her belief that an educator’s strong positive connection with students is essential to their academic success.

Professionals promote high standards for themselves, their colleagues, and their students. They are multidimensional people who use their many talents to enrich the lives of children and families.

Early childhood professionals constantly change in response to new jobs created by the expanding field of early childhood education. They continually improve their skills and knowledge. You can expect that you will participate in many professional development activities, will be constantly involved in new programs and practices, and will have opportunities to engage in new and different roles as a professional.

THE SIX STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM

Being a professional goes beyond academic degrees and experiences. Professionalism in early childhood education is based on the six NAEYC Standards for professional development. All six of the standards are important for your professional development, as shown in Figure 1.1. These are:

1. Promoting child development and learning
2. Building family and community relationships
3. Promoting family and community relationships
4. Promoting practice
5. Promoting reflective practice
6. Promoting reflective practice

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Who is an early childhood professional?
2. What are the six standards for becoming an early childhood education (ECE) professional?
3. What is developmentally appropriate practice?
4. What are pathways to professional development for early childhood educators?
5. Why is developing a philosophy of education important?
6. What are the new roles for early childhood professionals?
3. Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families
4. Using developmentally effective approaches to connect with children and families
5. Using content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum
6. Becoming a professional

Each of these standards plays a powerful role in determining who and what a professional is and how professionals implement practice in early childhood classrooms. Let’s examine each of these standards and see how you can apply them to your professional practice.

**Standard 1: Child Development and Learning**

As an early childhood professional, you will need to know about child development, the stages of physical, social, mental, and linguistic growth that occur from birth through age eight. Knowledge of child development is fundamental for all early childhood educators regardless of their roles or the ages of the children they teach. It enables you to confidently implement developmentally appropriate practices with all children. All early childhood professionals “use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging.”
Multiple Influences and Child Development. Young children are shaped by multiple influences that determine their life outcomes:

- **Children’s culture.** Culture is a group’s or an individual’s way of life including basic values, beliefs, religion, language, clothing, food, and various practices. Culture determines the foods children eat, the kind of care they receive or do not receive from their parents, and helps determine how they view and react to the world.

- **Language.** Quite often in immigrant families, the burden of helping the non-English speaking family members communicate falls on the child. Children often act as interpreters for their families and have to learn to communicate as a survival skill.

- **Social relationships.** Getting along with one’s peers and significant adults, such as teachers, is as important a skill as learning to read and write. Unfortunately, many young children don’t have the parental guidance and support they need in order to learn the social skills necessary for peaceful and harmonious living.

- **Children’s and families’ socioeconomic conditions.** Children in poverty represent 24 percent of the total population. Research clearly shows that children in poverty do not do well in school and life. This means that you will teach children in poverty and as a professional are responsible for their learning, growth, and development.

- **Children with disabilities.** It is estimated that 5.2 percent of all children in public schools have a disability of some kind. There is every reason to believe that this number will increase as diagnostic methods increase. Children come to child care, preschool, and grades K–3 with many physical, behavioral, and learning disabilities. As an early childhood professional, you will care for and educate children with physical, behavioral, and learning disabilities.

Early Childhood Special Education Standards and You. Just as NAEYC has standards for professional development, so does the Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children. These professional standards guide the preparation of teachers who are preparing to be early childhood special education teachers. These standards apply to you for two reasons: First, you will be teaching in an inclusive classroom, a classroom in which children with disabilities are included in the regular classroom. The inclusive classroom is the “new normal” for teachers today. Second, you must know about typical and atypical child growth and development and how to provide developmentally appropriate teaching and learning for children with disabilities in your classroom. You can access DEC’s professional standards in the Linking to Learning section at the end of the chapter.

Standard 2: Building Family and Community Relationships

Families are an important part of children’s lives. In fact, the family and its environment are the single most important factor in a child’s life. It makes sense for you to involve, work with, and advocate for parents and families. To do this, you need to know and understand the characteristics of children’s families and the communities in which they live. Your collaboration with families will also involve supporting and empowering them. In addition, you will want and need to know how to involve families and communities in all aspects of children’s development and learning. It is very important to be respectful of children and their families in order to build strong relationships. Saying that you are respectful of children and families is one thing; putting it...
into practice means you will use your knowledge and skills of child development and family involvement to make respectfulness a reality. Here are a few examples of things you can do to demonstrate your respectfulness for children and families:

- Talk with parents whose children have restricted diets to determine acceptable foods and recipes so all children can participate in classroom nutrition activities such as cooking.
- Validate children’s home languages by learning some words and teaching them to the other children. For example, when counting the days on the calendar, you can count in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and so on.
- Learn and find out about families’ child-rearing practices and how they handle routines relating to toileting, behavioral problems, and so on.

Learning how to build family relationships is an important part of your professional development. Respectful and reciprocal relationships with parents and families empower them to be involved in their children’s education.

Daniel Leija, known as “Dan the science man,” a third grade teacher at Esparza Elementary School, is the 2011 Texas Teacher of the Year. Every Monday, Daniel conducts televised science experiments to the whole campus as one way to help bridge the gap between concepts and real-world application. As a ten-year veteran of early childhood education, Leija has written an essay about what it means to be a teacher and to be passionate about early childhood education. Here are his ideals, which can guide your teaching, too!

I am a teacher. I have answered my nation’s call to redefine the future. I have been entrusted to nurture and develop our country’s most precious resource . . . our children.

I am a coach, mentor, counselor and friend, fully prepared to take the necessary steps to make each student’s dream become a reality. I will never waver from my course.

I am a professional, the descendant of a proud and honorable heritage. I hold myself to a higher standard because I am accountable to our nation, my community, the students, and myself. I will always conduct myself in a manner that will bring credit to my field. I actively seek ways to sharpen my skills through continuing education and collaboration with my colleagues.

I am a partner. I work together with the community, business organizations, support agencies, administration, and parents to ensure each student receives the quality education that many seek and relatively few realize. My classroom door is always open for my students and all who wish to catch a glimpse of how tomorrow’s leaders are being prepared.

I am a shepherd. I openly reach out to and guide each student who passes through my door; rich, poor, privileged, or disadvantaged. I nurture and encourage each student to achieve their full potential. My students will overcome life’s obstacles to become successful.

I am an advocate. I encourage my students to take risks, think outside the box, and always dream big. I help my students learn to be humble winners, gracious losers, and work together as a team to achieve their goals.

I am a coach. I offer counsel to students who have nowhere else to turn in times of personal crisis. I offer the support, guidance, and encouragement my students need to pilot them through their hour of darkness. I will never jeopardize that bond of trust. I gladly take on each of these roles to ensure my students have the tools they need to be successful in an ever-changing world.

I am a teacher. I have answered the call. I cannot and will not fail.

Daniel Leija’s determination and passion for education serve as a model for you and all educators.

Source: Contributed by Daniel Leija, Teacher of the Year at Esparza Elementary School.
Standard 3: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Children and Families

One of your most important responsibilities as an early childhood professional is to observe, document, and assess children’s learning. Assessment is the process of collecting information about children’s development, learning, behavior, academic progress, need for special services, and achievement to make decisions. The outcomes of your assessment guide you in making decisions about what and how to teach young children, and they will also provide you with abundant information to share with parents and families. Consider assessment a three-way process: you the professional gathering data; using that data to make instructional decisions; and sharing assessment data with parents to get their comments, opinions, feedback, and advice about how best to teach their young children.

Observation and documentation are just two forms of assessment that you will use in ongoing systematic ways. In fact, observation is one of your main means for gathering information about young children.

Standard 4: Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families

Selecting and using developmentally effective approaches is an essential part of your professional responsibility. In Standard 1, we discussed how to promote child development and learning. The use of developmentally appropriate practices and approaches supports Standard 4. Throughout this text, in each chapter, we discuss how to use and apply developmentally appropriate practice. In fact, one of the hallmarks of this book is the integration of developmentally appropriate practices in all dimensions of providing high-quality learning environments for young children.

Using Developmentally Effective Approaches. Developmentally effective approaches and methods include fostering language development and communication; making the most of the environment and routines; capitalizing on incidental teaching, focusing on children’s characteristics, needs, and interests; linking children’s language and culture to the early childhood program; teaching through social interactions; creating support for play; addressing children’s challenging behaviors; supporting learning through technology; and using integrative approaches to curriculum.13

In addition, as an early childhood professional, you will integrate your understanding of and relationships with children and families, your understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning, and your knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive developmentally appropriate learning for all children.14 To be a professional in this area, you will demonstrate positive relationships with children and families. In the final analysis, all education is about relationships: how you relate to your colleagues, how you relate to parents and other family members, and how you relate to children. In responsive relationships you are responsive to the needs and interests of all children and their families.

Standard 5: Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum

Content areas are important to children’s learning. Content areas form the basis for children’s learning to read, write, do mathematics and science, be creative, and be successful in school and in life. Consequently, early childhood professionals understand the importance of each content area in children’s development and learning.
demonstrate the essential knowledge and skills needed to provide appropriate environments that support learning in each content area, and demonstrate basic knowledge of the research base underlying each content area.15

**Content Areas.** The content areas in early childhood are the following:

- Language and literacy, which consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Reading, which includes the learning skills necessary for beginning to read and being able to read fluently for meaning. The national goal for reading is for all children to read on grade level by grade three.
- The arts, including music, creative movement, dance, drama, and various forms of art
- Mathematics, the study of numbers, patterns, space, and change
- Science, the use of observation and experimentation to describe and explain things
- Technology, the application of tools and information to change and modify the natural environment in order to solve problems and make products
- Engineering, the process of utilizing materials and forces of nature for the benefit of mankind
- Social studies, which involves geography, history, economics, and social relations/civics
- Physical activity and physical education, which includes dance, sports, health, and nutrition

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).** Today there is a growing emphasis on incorporating engineering and technology content in the school curriculum beginning in preschool. You will hear a lot about STEM throughout your teaching preparation and career. For example, Michelle Shearer, 2011 National Teacher of the Year, is an advocate for STEM education for all K–12 students and successfully reaches those who have been traditionally underrepresented in scientific fields, including students with special needs and those from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Her teaching methods rely heavily on real-life applications of scientific concepts.16

Much of the content knowledge in pre-K through third grade programs is integrated in state, national, and the Common Core national standards adopted by the states. However, not all of the curriculum is specified by or through standards. What is taught in early childhood programs is also based on children’s interests and on the “teachable moment,” when classroom, school, and communities lend themselves to teaching ideas, concepts, and skills. How you teach with standards is a result of your professional background and training. This is where Professional Standard 4, Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families, applies to your teaching in each of the content areas and your use of instructional processes to teach each area.

The knowledge of the content areas is known as **content knowledge.** Teachers must understand the subjects they teach, for example, math, science, social studies. In addition to learning and knowing content knowledge, teachers also must know how to teach students so that they learn content knowledge. **Pedagogical knowledge** involves learning how to teach and how to facilitate children’s learning and achievements. Pedagogical knowledge includes instructional practices and how to use them to help children learn. For example, you take your knowledge of mathematics and the standards and use appropriate instructional practices. Finally, high-quality teachers must also know about and understand the children they teach. This is called **knowledge of learners and learning** and involves applying developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) to your teaching.

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**content knowledge** The knowledge that comes from content areas.

**pedagogical knowledge** Facilitating learning, including knowledge of how students develop and learn; school, family, and community contexts; and children’s prior experiences, to develop meaningful learning experiences.
Modeling and Using Technology for Teaching and Learning. Technology is the application of tools and information to make products and solve problems and the use of electronic and digital applications. In your classroom, you and your children will use technology for word processing, sending and receiving messages, publishing, and Web research. Brandi Ousley, Technology Teacher of the Year at McAllen ISD in Texas, believes:

Reaching my kids, that’s my job. In this fast-paced world I have to compete with handheld systems, Internet, YouTube, and every other piece of technology out there. In order for me to be an effective teacher, I have to meet my students in their world. Simply put, I must use technology to educate them. Using technology allows me to be a part of my students’ world. By using educational videos, PowerPoint presentations, iPod Touches, document readers, projectors and the Internet I am able to effectively teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills in an enjoyable way.17

Like Brandi, today’s teacher is a technological teacher. Today’s students are technological students. One reality of society and education today is that technology permeates all facets of our life: working, teaching, and learning. You will use technology of all kinds in order to:

• Create meaningful learning activities for children.
• Teach children how to use technology and technological applications to enhance their own learning.
• Assess children’s achievement.
• Connect children to learning experiences outside the classroom and around the world.
• Teach children the technological skills they will need in the workforce of the future.
• Keep your own records and communicate with families.

You can learn more about technology and your role as a teacher by accessing the ISTE National Educational Technology Standards (NETS-T) and Performance Indicator for Teachers at the website of the International Society for Technology in Education in the Linking to Learning section at the end of this chapter.

Standard 6: Becoming a Professional

Early childhood professionals conduct themselves as professionals and identify themselves as members of their chosen profession. Your identification and involvement in your profession enables you to say proudly that you are a teacher of young children. Being a professional means that you (1) know about and engage in ethical practice; (2) engage in continuous lifelong learning and professional development; (3) collaborate with colleagues, parents, families, and community partners; (4) engage in reflective practice; and (5) advocate on behalf of children, families, and the profession. These competencies represent the heart and soul of professional practice. You should include in your professional development plan steps to increase your knowledge in each of these areas.
Technology Tie-in

Tweeting in the Classroom

My original intention for using Twitter in the classroom was to create an instant school and home learning connection. Many children go home to the question, “What did you learn in school today?” Despite all the learning that takes place in a single day, many children reply, “Nothing” or “I don’t know.” I wanted parents to have a conversation starter with their children the moment they walked out of school.

As I began using Twitter, I realized the benefits of using this social media tool were far-reaching than I anticipated. I didn’t expect the additional benefits such as enhancing our end-of-the-day classroom meeting by increasing community and student engagement, encouraging student reflection, and providing assessment data to guide future instruction. I found using Twitter supported the learning of writing skills. Students were learning how to summarize and how to write for an authentic purpose and specific audience. They learned about writing conventions in context, including grammar, spelling, keyboarding skills, and writing process skills. Additionally, our class has become connected with other classes in and out of our school district, and around the country. My students are learning essential twenty-first century skills, including digital citizenship and how to use technology to collaborate and communicate with others in our global society.

Getting Started

1. Use Twitter. The best way to experience the potential of using Twitter in the classroom is to Tweet. To be a consumer and contributor in the Twitter world go to Twitter.com and create your individual account. I use Twitter to support my own professional development. My professional Twitter account @JodiLeeConrad is used to Tweet about what I am learning, to connect with other professionals and organizations, and to keep current on new research and teaching strategies.

2. Determine your purpose. Consider your audience and purpose. Will you be using Twitter to communicate with parents, other classrooms, or both? What will you be communicating? Will you invite students into this process? If so, how?

In my classroom, we end our day by gathering in front of the interactive whiteboard to reflect and discuss our learning. Students collaboratively create and send out a Tweet to share our learning with parents and other followers. In addition to students Tweeting about their learning, I use Twitter to communicate with parents about upcoming events, provide important reminders, and make parents aware of online learning resources.

3. Set up a Twitter account for your classroom. Create a Twitter account for your classroom at Twitter.com. You may want to use your class name. For example, MsConradAL1 is my classroom Twitter name. I used my name, school abbreviation (Abraham Lincoln), and 1 for first grade. Create a sense of ownership by getting students involved.

Ethical Conduct

The exercise of responsible behavior with children, families, colleagues, and community members.

Engaging in Ethical Practice. Ethical conduct—your exercise of responsible behavior with children, families, colleagues, and community members—enables you to confidently engage in exemplary professional practice. The profession of early childhood education has a set of ethical standards to guide your thinking and behavior. NAEYC has developed a Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment, which states in part:

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of my ability I will

• Never harm children.
• Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge of child development and early childhood education.
• Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
• Respect colleagues in early childhood education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
from the beginning and creating your Twitter name as a class.

4. **Share your Twitter account with students.** Explain to the class what Twitter is and how it will be used in the classroom. Twitter is a micro-blog. This means that you only have 140 characters to communicate your message. Twitter is a tool that is used to share ideas with others on the Internet. Let students know that parents will be invited to follow the class on Twitter.

5. **Consider privacy settings and options.** Twitter offers a variety of privacy settings. You will find many options in account settings. When selecting the settings to meet the needs of your classroom, consider your own comfort level with sharing information in this type of social media outlet as well as checking with your district’s technology department. They will be able to help you select the privacy settings that your district is comfortable with.

6. **Share your Twitter name with parents and invite them to follow you.** Explain to parents what Twitter is, your purpose for using it in the classroom, and the security measures you have in place to ensure the safety of the students. Share your Twitter name and invite parents to follow the class.

Using Twitter in the classroom is a learning experience for my students and me! Twitter authentically engages students and makes them reflect on their learning, summarize the most important parts of their day, and share their learning with a real audience. My students created a Tweet to share their learning about a reading and writing unit: “We are reading & writing series books. We are adding dialogue to our books to show what the characters are saying & how they are saying it.” To share their learning about a new reading strategy we learned about, students Tweeted, “We read

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**You can begin now to incorporate professional ethical practices into your interactions with children and colleagues.** To stimulate your thinking, the Activities for Professional Development at the end of each chapter include an *ethical dilemma*, a situation an individual encounters in the workplace for which there is more than one possible solution, each carrying a strong moral justification. A dilemma requires a person to choose between two alternatives; each has some benefits but also some costs. Typically, one stakeholder's legitimate needs and interest will give way to those of another.
As you reflect on and respond to each dilemma, use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct as your guide and resource. You can access it at the NAEYC website in the Linking to Learning section at the end of the chapter.

**Continuous and Lifelong Professional Development Opportunities.** A professional is never a “finished” product; you will always be involved in a process of studying, learning, changing, and becoming more professional. Teachers of the Year and others who share with you their philosophies and beliefs throughout this book are always in the process of becoming more professional.

Becoming a professional means you will participate in training and education beyond the minimum needed for your current position. You will also want to consider your career objectives and the qualifications you might need for positions of increasing responsibility. For example, Lauren Gonzalez, a former kindergarten and third grade teacher, has certification in English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education. Lauren now teaches children with disabilities in a special education classroom.

Part of your lifelong learning will involve collaborative planning. You will engage in collaborative planning, meeting collaboratively in grade-level teams or across grade-level teams in order to examine student data together and to plan and develop instructional strategies. In your planning, you will incorporate and align your curriculum with local, Common Core, and state standards.

**Collaborating with Parents, Families, and Community Partners.** Parents, families, and the community are essential partners in the process of schooling. Knowing how to effectively collaborate with these key partners will serve you well throughout your career.

Family education and support are important responsibilities of the early childhood professional. Children’s learning begins and continues within the context of the family unit, whatever that unit may be. Learning how to comfortably and confidently work with parents and families is an essential part of teaching children.

**Reflective Practice.** Reflective practice is a process that helps you think about how children learn and enables you to make decisions about how best to support their development and learning. Thinking about learning and understanding how children learn makes it easier for you to improve your teaching effectiveness, student learning, and professional satisfaction. Reflective practice involves deliberate and careful consideration about the children you teach, the theories on which you base your teaching, how you teach, what children learn, and how you will teach in the future. Although solitary reflection is useful, the power of reflective practice is more fully realized when you engage in such practice with your mentor teacher and colleagues. In a word, the reflective teacher is a thoughtful teacher. Reflective practice involves the three integrated steps shown in Figure 1.2.

**Advocacy.** Advocacy is the act of pleading the causes of children and families to the profession and the public and engaging in strategies designed to improve the circumstances of those children and families. Advocates move beyond their day-to-day professional responsibilities and work collaboratively to help others. Children and families today need adults who understand their needs and who will work to improve the health, education, and well-being of all young children. You and other early childhood professionals are in a unique position to know and understand children and their needs and to make a difference in their lives. For example, Connecticut Teacher of the Year Kristi Luetjen is praised for integrating students with special needs into her classroom. She dedicates herself to improving the services for kindergartners with special needs. She blends the lines of regular and special education. She collaborates with other teachers and incorporates yoga practice into the curriculum to create a
yoga program for kindergartners. Luetjen says, “I am grateful for the opportunity to advocate for our youngest students, our students with disabilities, and the general importance of a kindergarten education.”

Like Kristi Luetjen, you can be a voice for children. These four steps will empower you as an advocate for children and their families:

**Step 1. Pick a topic you are passionate about!** Advocates are passionate about issues for which they advocate. Some issues that need passionate advocates are better pay for child care workers, universal preschool for all children, increased quality of child care, early literacy programs for all children, equal rights and opportunities for children with disabilities, and better dental health for young children.

**Step 2. Do something about it!** Advocate the way you communicate—network! Use Facebook, Twitter, Google +, and other social media to connect with others. Alternatively, you could make a presentation and volunteer to speak to groups. For example, one of my students, Nicki, advocates for the use of therapy dogs for children with autism. Nicki has developed a presentation using Prezi (a type of presentation software and storytelling tool for exploring and sharing ideas on a virtual canvas) to tell her story about therapy dogs and their power to help children with disabilities. Nicki uses this presentation to speak to children, parents, and teachers.
**Step 3. Join a group!** Solitary advocates can be effective, but there is power in numbers! Collaborate with others and use social media to connect and advocate for your cause. Martha Gallegos, another student of mine, is passionate about helping young Hispanic children learn to read. Martha has teamed up with Success for Life Through Reading, an organization devoted to involving university students in reading to and giving books away to preschool children. Martha says “I found Success for Life so I could make a difference on a larger scale. Last year we read to over 500 Hispanic children!”

**Step 4. Never give up!** Keep focused on your passion!

It’s easy to give up, but strong advocates never give up on advocating for what they are passionate about. Be creative and find many ways to get your message out. Advocacy gets to the heart of our next topic, professional dispositions, because it is through and with advocacy that you will put into practice many of the values and beliefs that you hold as an early childhood professional.

**Professional Dispositions**

Professional dispositions are the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence your behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and members of the community and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are grounded in beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, and responsibility. For example, dispositions might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment. We have already discussed other dispositions, such as ethical conduct, collaborating with colleagues and families, and reflective practice. All programs that prepare childhood professionals should have a set of dispositions that are important for professional practice.

I believe that for the early childhood professional, caring is the most important disposition of all. Professionals care about children; they accept and respect all children and their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a professional, you will work in classrooms, programs, and other settings where things do not always go smoothly—for example, children will not always learn ably and well, and they will not always be clean and free from illness and hunger. Children’s and their parents’ backgrounds and ways of life will not always be the same as yours. Caring means you will lose sleep trying to find a way to help a child learn to read, and you will spend long hours planning and gathering materials. Caring also means you will not leave your intelligence, enthusiasm, and other talents at home but will bring them into the center, the classroom, administration offices, board of directors meetings, and wherever else you can make a difference in the lives of children and their families.

The Professionalism in Practice feature about caring and kindness illustrates this important point with many examples that you can use in your program or classroom.

**DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE**

Knowledge of child development provides the foundation for conducting developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), which is a framework of principles and guidelines for best practice in the care and education of young children, birth through age eight. With your understanding of child development you will be able to select essential curricula and instructional approaches with confidence. All early childhood professionals use their understanding of child development as the foundation for their work with young children.
Knowing Children. It is essential for you to have and demonstrate an understanding of child development for both regularly developing children and children with disabilities. Child development knowledge enables you to understand how children grow and develop across all developmental domains—cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, physical, language, and aesthetic domains as well as play, activity, learning processes, and motivation to learn. Knowledge of individual children, combined with knowledge of child growth and development, enables you to provide care and education that is developmentally appropriate for each child. Today’s early childhood professionals teach in inclusive classrooms. Inclusive classrooms are classrooms in which students with disabilities are supported in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools and receive the specialized instruction they need to be successful within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities. Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) means basing your teaching on how children grow and develop. DAP is the recommended teaching practice of the early childhood profession. The following Teaching and Learning in the Inclusive Classroom section provides you with eight professional practices for teaching in the inclusive classroom.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

It is essential to treat all children fairly regardless of their needs. Refer to all students as people first and offer the support they need to be successful. When you explain to someone that you teach students with special needs, say, “I teach children with autism.” Don’t say: “I teach autistic students.” Put the child first, the disability second.

State and federal laws are forever changing and opening more and more opportunities for all children with disabilities to be included in the classroom and across the school campus. Inclusion may already be in place in your school or it may still be in the planning stages. Here are some helpful ways you can embrace it:

1. Accept all children for who they are as a person, not how they will perform on grade-level tests.
2. Include all children with disabilities in the same activities, events, and opportunities all children have in the same grade and age level.
3. Understand the age and grade level that you teach. Offer books, posters, and classroom materials that are safe and fun for all students. These are in addition to the required materials for lessons and the assigned curriculum.
4. Encourage and support peer collaboration. Peers can help children with special needs by modeling appropriate learning behaviors and promoting developmentally appropriate socialization.
5. Develop individual visual schedules and make work and behavioral expectations throughout the school day clear to each child. Allowing a student with disabilities
A Garden of Kindness and Caring

"Kind hearts, the garden; kind thoughts, the root; kind words, the blossoms; kind deeds, the fruit." If we think of our classrooms as gardens, then teachers are the master gardeners. Not only do we need to plant academic seeds of many varieties; we need to plant the seeds of kindness and caring, as well. Our actions and our attitudes define who we are. Kindness and caring are not skills; they are attitudes. As teachers, we need to be the essence of kindness and caring. We must cultivate our students to bloom into the loveliest of flowers, and it starts with the attitude and the actions of the teacher. We believe that students who can express kindness are happier and more productive in the classroom.

We are instructors in a team classroom: forty students and two teachers. Every student in our classroom knows that he/she is loved and accepted and every student in our classroom knows that he/she is accountable for his/her attitudes and actions. We promote a simple, yet positive behavior plan for our classroom: be safe, be respectful, be responsible. We also believe in task-oriented consequences, rather than time-oriented consequences. For example, if a child says something unkind to another student, resulting in hurt feelings, a letter/picture of apology is a better choice than missing five minutes of playtime.

professionalism in practice

6. Provide rewards and incentives to all children. Rewards and incentives go beyond candy and toys. They can be fun and educational activities. For example, allowing the class to participate in an active song or opportunity to follow directions through music allows for legitimate movement and creates happy and involved children.

7. Know and use your resources on campus and in the district. For example, use district resource teachers to help you plan for how to transition your children from one grade to another.

8. Collaborate with parents. Parents can provide you with critical information about how their children learn and about what motivates them, etc. This process also enables parents to feel included and a part of their children’s education. Remember, parents have information you need to help you and their children be successful!

Contributed by Laura Lee Reed, Pre-K Special Needs Teacher, Lee County (Florida), Golden Apple Teacher of the Year.
At the beginning of the school year, we read the book *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Happiness for Kids* by Carol McCloud. This book encourages positive behavior through love, kindness, and appreciation. The premise of the book is that everyone in the world carries an invisible bucket. The bucket has only one purpose, and it is to hold good thoughts and feelings about yourself; but you need other people to fill your bucket. So when you smile, show love to someone, say or do a kind deed, you are being a bucket filler. But you can also dip into someone’s bucket and take out some happiness when your words and actions are inappropriate. Every morning, during our morning meeting, we encourage our students to be bucket fillers, not bucket dippers. We encourage our students to say, “Thank you for filling my bucket!” when an act of kindness is shown, or “You dipped into my bucket.” when hurtful words or actions are not acceptable.

To promote our action plan of kindness, each student decorates his/her own bucket, including a self-portrait to be displayed yearlong in our classroom. (See photo.) We often refer to our bulletin board when issues arise in our classroom. Our “visible buckets” remind us of the importance of being kind at school, on the playground, in the cafeteria, on the bus. Our “invisible buckets” travel everywhere with us, reminding us that we can make a difference, through kindness and caring, wherever we are!

We can also promote kindness and caring through community service. Each month, we “fill the buckets of others” in our school or community with acts of kindness. Recently, we made an American flag from chain-links and presented it to our local firefighters and policemen as a way of saying thank you for keeping our school safe. (See photo.) There are so many ways that "wee hands can do big deeds."

Most important, we need to teach our students to be kind and caring through example. Our students learn from our actions and our attitudes. Every teacher has a garden and your garden will have a variety of plants. How you choose to cultivate your garden will determine its beauty. Choose to cultivate kindness and caring in your classroom.

Source: Contributed by Christa Pehrson and Vicki Sheffler, 2002 USA TODAY All-USA First Team Teachers, Amos K. Hutchinson Elementary School, Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

**Core Considerations in Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

Every day, as an early childhood practitioner, you will make a great many decisions, both long-term and short-term. As you do so, plan with your state, local, and Common Core standards for children's learning and development and be intentional in helping children achieve these outcomes. The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in this intentionality, the knowledge that you as a practitioner consider when you make decisions, and that you always aim for goals that are both challenging and achievable for all children.

**Making Developmentally Appropriate Decisions**

In all aspects of their work with young children, early childhood professionals consider three areas that are essential to the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice, as shown in Figure 1.3.

**Child Development and Learning.** This refers to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.
Teachers who are knowledgeable about child development and learning are able to make broad predictions about what children of a particular age group typically will be like, what they typically will and won’t be capable of, and what strategies and approaches will most likely promote their optimal learning and development. With this knowledge, teachers can make preliminary decisions with some confidence about environment, materials, interactions, and activities.23

**Each Child as an Individual.** This refers to what teachers learn about each child and has implications for how best to adapt for and be responsive to that individual variation. To be effective, you must get to know each child in the group well. You do this using a variety of methods—such as observation, interactions, examination of children’s work, and talking with families. From this information, you make plans and adjustments to promote each child’s individual development and learning as fully as possible. Developmental variation among children is the norm; but any one child’s progress also will vary across domains and disciplines, contexts, and time. Children differ in many other respects, too—in their strengths, interests, preferences, personalities, approaches to learning, knowledge and skills based on prior experiences, and more. Children may also have special learning needs; sometimes these have been diagnosed and sometimes they have not. Responding to each child individually is fundamental to developmentally appropriate practice.24

**Social and Cultural Contexts.** This refers to the values, expectations, and behaviors that teachers must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family. For example, growing poverty in the United States places more children at risk for learning than
ever before. This socioeconomic context has many implications for your teaching. It means you will have to help children overcome family conditions that may put them at risk for learning. Language is influenced by cultural context. Another example involves many immigrant families who come to the United States illiterate in both English and their native language. You will work with such families as you endeavor to create literacy programs that will help them and their children.

As children grow up in families and in cultural communities, they come to certain understandings about what their group considers appropriate—what it values, expects, and admires. They learn this through direct teaching from parents and other important people in their lives, and by observing the behavior of those around them. Children learn to show respect, how to interact with people they know well and those they have just met, how to regard time and personal space, how to dress, and countless other attitudes and actions. Children typically absorb these rules very early and very deeply, so they live by them with little conscious thought. When young children are in a group setting outside the home, what makes sense to them and how they experience their world depend on the social and cultural contexts to which they are accustomed. Teachers take such contextual factors into account, along with the children’s age and their individual differences, in shaping all aspects of the learning environment.25

Ideas for how to conduct DAP are found throughout this book. These ideas and specific strategies for implementing DAP serve as your road map of teaching. As you read about DAP suggestions, consider how you can begin to apply them in your professional practice.

**Developmentally and culturally responsive practice (DCRP)** includes being sensitive to and responding to children’s cultural and ethnic backgrounds and needs. The United States is a nation of diverse people, and this diversity will increase. Children in every early childhood program represent this diversity. When children enter schools and programs, they do not leave their uniqueness, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, and race at the classroom door. As part of your professional practice you will embrace, value, and incorporate **multiculturalism** into your teaching. Learning how to teach children of all cultures is an important part of your professional role. In addition, the antibias curriculum information that follows offers guidelines that will help you teach children from diverse backgrounds. The following list shows some popular and informative books that can help you achieve this goal. As you read these books, make a list of key ideas and how you can incorporate them into your teaching.

- **Delpit, L. (2006). Other People’s Children: Conflict in the Classroom. New York: New Press.** In an interesting analysis of what is going on in American classrooms today, Lisa Delpit suggests that many of the academic problems attributed to children of color are actually the result of miscommunication as schools and “other people’s children” struggle with the imbalance of power and the dynamics of inequality plaguing our system.

- **Derman-Sparks, L., and Ramsey, P. (2006). What If All the Kids Are White? Anti-Bias Multicultural Education with Young Children and Families. New York: Teachers College Press.** How do educators teach about racial and cultural diversity if all their students are Caucasian? The authors propose seven learning themes to help young Caucasian children resist messages of racism and build identity and skills for thriving in a multicultural country and world.

- **Espinosa, L. M. (2010). Getting It Right for Young Children from Diverse Backgrounds: Applying Research to Improve Practice. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.** This book reflects the current state of the field in terms of best practice and research. It provides a rich and comprehensive look at the needs of young children from diverse backgrounds. Espinosa also emphasizes the importance of collaboration among teachers and families to best serve students.
• Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2007). Diversity in Early Care and Education: Honoring Differences, 5th ed. Chicago: McGraw-Hill. This book explores the rich diversity encountered in programs and environments for children ages birth to eight, including those serving children with special needs. The emphasis is on the practical and immediate concerns of the early childhood professional and family service worker, through all information has strong theoretical support.

• March, M. M., and Turner-Vorbeck, T. (2007). Other Kinds of Families: Embracing Diversity in Schools. New York: Teachers College Press. The authors contend that the vast diversity found in schools and society today suggests an urgent need to reconsider the ways in which families are currently represented and addressed in school curriculum and culture. They address such issues as multigenerational views of the schooling experiences of immigrant families, the educational needs of gay and lesbian families, and the experiences of homeless students and their families with the educational system.

Teaching Diverse Children. Think for a moment about all of the classrooms of children across the United States. What do you think their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic makeup is? More than likely, the demographics of these children are different from those of the children you went to school with in kindergarten or first grade. Consider this data about America’s children:

• In 2009, 55 percent of U.S. children were white, non-Hispanic; 23 percent were Hispanic; 15 percent were black; and 4 percent were Asian.  
• The percentage of children who are Hispanic has increased faster than that of any other racial or ethnic group. Hispanics accounted for 16.3 percent of the U.S. population in 2010.

The increase in racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in America is reflected in early childhood classrooms, which are also receiving increased numbers of children with disabilities and developmental delays. Consider the current student population at two elementary schools in different parts of the country. At Susan B. Anthony Elementary School in Sacramento, California: 22 percent are Hispanic, 60 percent are Asian, 13 percent are African American, and 1 percent are white. Moreover, 97 percent of the children receive discounted/free lunches. In San Angelo, Texas, at Alta Loma Elementary: 69 percent are Hispanic, less than 1 percent are Asian, 7 percent are African American, and 20 percent are white; 84 percent of the children receive discounted/free lunches. The chances are that you will teach in a school in which the majority of students are minority students! The accompanying Diversity Tie-In provides you with ideas to help you be a successful teacher of diverse children.

Antibias Curriculum. Conducting a developmentally and culturally appropriate program also means that you will include in your curriculum activities and materials that help challenge and change all biases of any kind that seek to diminish and portray as inferior all children based on their gender, race, culture, disability, language, or socioeconomic status. You can accomplish this standard by implementing an antibias curriculum. Antibias curriculum is an approach that seeks to provide children with an understanding of social and behavioral problems related to prejudice and seeks to provide them with the knowledge, attitude, and skills needed to combat prejudice. The book Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children is the profession’s primary resource for understanding and implementing an antibias curriculum. If you have not read this book, you should put it at the top of your list of professional books to read. An antibias curriculum:

embraces an educational philosophy as well as specific techniques and content. It is value based: Differences are good; oppressive ideas and behaviors are not. It sets up
Meeting the Challenge: Teaching with Respect and Equity

The diverse composition of early childhood classrooms challenges you to make your classroom responsive to the various needs of all your children, which is part of your professional responsibility. Developmentally appropriate practice also means that you will take into consideration the diverse nature of each child. In classrooms today, early childhood teachers work with children of varying cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and needs.

Let’s look at some of the things you can do to be a responsible professional who is culturally aware and who teaches with respect and equity:

**STRATEGY 1** Be Aware of Your Own Multicultural Development

- Honestly examine your attitudes and views as they relate to people of other cultures. You may be carrying baggage that you have to get rid of to authentically and honestly educate all of your children to their fullest capacity.
- Read widely about your cultural role as a professional.
- Learn about the habits, customs, beliefs, and religious practices of the cultures represented by your children.
- Ask some of your students’ parents to tutor you in their language so you can learn basic phrases for greeting and questioning, the meaning of nonverbal gestures, and the way to appropriately and respectfully address parents and children.

**STRATEGY 2** Make Every Child Welcome

- Make your classroom a place where diversity is encouraged and everyone is treated fairly. Create a classroom environment that is vibrant and alive with the cultures of your children. You can do this with pictures, artifacts, and objects provided by parents.
- Support and use children’s home language and culture. Create a safe environment in which children feel free to talk about and share their culture and language. Encourage children to discuss, draw, paint, and write about what their culture means to them.

**STRATEGY 3** Make Every Parent Welcome

- Invite parents and families to share their languages and cultures in your classroom. Music, stories, and customs provide a rich background for learning about and respecting other cultures.
- Communicate with parents in their home languages.
- Work with parents to help them (and you) bridge the differences between the way schools operate and the norms of their homes and cultures.

**STRATEGY 4** Collaborate with Your Colleagues

- Ask colleagues to share ideas with you about how to respond to questions, requests, and concerns of children and parents.
- Volunteer to form a faculty study group to read, discuss, and learn how to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of all children.

**STRATEGY 5** Become Active in Your Community

- Learn as much as you can about your community and the cultural resources it can provide. Communities are very multicultural places!
- Collaborate with community and state organizations that work with culturally and linguistically diverse families and populations. Ask them for volunteers who can help you meet the diverse needs of your children. Children need to interact with and value role models from all cultures.
- Volunteer to act as a community outreach coordinator to provide families with services such as family literacy and school readiness information.

You can’t be a complete early childhood professional without a cultural dimension. As you become more culturally aware, you will increase your capacity for caring and understanding—and you and your students will learn and grow together.
a creative tension between respecting differences and not accepting unfair beliefs and acts. It asks teachers and children to confront troublesome issues rather than covering them up. An anti-bias perspective is integral to all aspects of daily classroom life.31

Here are some antibias strategies you should follow in your classroom:

• **Evaluate your classroom environment and instructional materials to determine if they are appropriate for an antibias curriculum.** Get rid of materials that are obstacles to your antibias goals, such as books that include children of only one race. In my visits to early childhood classrooms, I observe many that are “cluttered,” meaning they contain too many materials that do not contribute much to a multicultural learning environment. Include photos and representations from all cultures in your classroom and community.

• **Develop a plan for redesigning your classroom.** For example, you may decide to add a literacy center that encourages children to “read” and “write” about cultural themes. Remember that children need the time, opportunity, and materials required to read and write about a wide range of antibias topics. In addition, since most classrooms don’t have enough books on topics relating to gender or with cultural and ethnic themes, make sure you provide them.

• **Evaluate your current curriculum and approaches to diversity.** This will help you understand how your curriculum is or is not supporting antibias approaches. Learning experiences should be relevant to your students, their community, and their families’ cultures.

• **Observe children’s play and social interactions to determine what you have to do to make sure that all children are accepted and valued.** For example, some children of different cultural backgrounds may not be included in particular play groups. This information allows you to develop plans for ensuring that children of all cultures and genders are included in play groups and activities.

• **Evaluate how you interact with children.** You can reflect on your teaching, videotape your teaching, and/or have a colleague observe your teaching. Such valuable professional material provides you with invaluable insight into how you interact with all children so you can make appropriate changes if necessary. For example, you may unknowingly give more attention to boys than to girls. Or you may be overlooking some important environmental accommodations that can support the learning of children with disabilities.

• **Include antibias activities in your daily and weekly classroom plans.** Intentional planning helps ensure that you are including a full range of antibias activities in your program. Intentional antibias planning also helps you integrate antibias activities into your curriculum for meeting national, state, and local learning standards.

• **Work with parents to incorporate your antibias curriculum.** Remember, parents are valuable resources in helping you achieve your standards.32

Implementing an antibias curriculum will not be easy and it will require a lot of hard work and effort on your part. However, this is what teaching and being a professional is all about. You owe it to yourself, your children, and the profession to conduct programs that enable all children to live and learn in bias-free programs.

**Creating Healthy, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environments.** Research consistently shows that children cared for and taught in enriched environments are healthier, happier, and more achievement-oriented.33 To achieve this standard for all children, you must provide them with environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging. There are many school-wide
efforts that provide for high-quality learning and social environments for young children. These include providing breakfast for children, supporting school-wide healthy living campaigns, and implementing anti-bullying programs. At the classroom level you can involve children in healthy eating lessons and activities such as having them conduct an environmental survey of the school to examine health and safety issues.

**Healthy Environments.** Provide for children’s physical and psychological health, safety, and sense of security. For example, the Austin Eco School in Austin, Texas, creates an environment for its students where they can learn and play in an environment that is free from chemical toxins typically found in cleansers, paint, and flooring. Increasingly, child care programs across the country are using eco-friendly diapers, nontoxic methods to control pests, and organic baby foods.

**Respectful Environments.** Show respect for each individual child and for his or her culture, home language, individual abilities or disabilities, family context, and community. Marcy Henniger, author of *Setting the Stage for Learning*, encourages parents and teachers to promote learning through cooking. Teachers can have an “exploration center” filled with learning activities and materials from different cultures such as foods and recipe books, where children can experiment and interact with cooking.34

Santos Ramirez, a first grader at Jay Shideler Elementary School in Topeka, Kansas, has ataxic cerebral palsy. He uses a DynaVox Vmax, an augmentative and alternative communication device that helps him communicate. Santos is in a regular, inclusive classroom with other first graders and enjoys physical education and recess along with his friends. Santos’s teacher, Lisa Hamilton, was initially nervous about having Santos in her class; however, “He won everyone over. He’s a regular kid trapped in a body that won’t work the way he wants it to. He is capable of the first grade curriculum. He is very intelligent.”35

**Supportive Environments.** Believe each child can learn and help children understand and make meaning of their experiences. Some schools and classrooms encourage and support their students by pairing students who have autism with typically developing children. This approach helps children with autism become familiar with the traditional classroom and brings the regular school experience to students who may spend most of their day in a classroom for autistic children.

**Challenging Environments.** Provide achievable and “stretching” experiences for all children. In challenging environments, children are encouraged to be their best and do their best. For example, one of Teacher of the Year Tracie Gossett’s second graders says of her, “She makes learning fun and makes us work hard so we can meet our standards.” But at the same time, Gossett’s children have fun learning! Another of her students says, “She makes everything a fun game and just fun by itself.” So, encouraging children to meet high standards while having fun learning is one of the hallmarks of a challenging environment.36

**Teaching the Whole Child**

Children are not one- or two-dimensional persons. Children are a unified whole across all developmental domains! There is much discussion today about teaching the whole child—physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, linguistically, and spiritually. This renewed interest in teaching the whole child reflects the profession’s ongoing dedication to developmentally appropriate practice. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) leads the Whole Child Initiative, a national effort to include the whole child in all instructional programs and practices.

The Whole Child Initiative is straightforward. If students are to master world-class academics, they need to be physically and emotionally healthy. They need to be well
Supportive Teachers Play Critical Roles in Children’s Academic Success

In a longitudinal study involving academically at-risk children, researchers examined factors that contribute to children’s ongoing success. Here is one of their findings:

Children who have a supportive relationship with their teacher, in an environment where they feel accepted and secure, are more likely to work hard and perceive themselves as academically capable.37

So, what does this mean for you?

• Any efforts to close or eliminate achievement gaps have to begin with instructional practices that focus on helping each child gain the confidence and ability to do better. Only in this way will children break out of the predictable pattern of only achieving at the same level from one year to the next.

• Children need teachers such as you to create a positive social and emotional relationship with them so they are motivated and engaged in classroom learning.

• Nurturing teacher–student relationships have their greatest impact on children with existing behavioral problems and those who have trouble regulating their behavior. Often these children don’t get the nurturing teacher–child relationships that they need in order to succeed. Going above and beyond to provide love, affection, and nurturing to problem children is essential for their ongoing academic achievement. For some children, you are their main source of love, affection, and attention.

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career pathways across the United States. What two things do you find most informative about this career pathway? How can you use the Oklahoma pathway to enhance your own professional development?

Just as there are many ways to enter any profession, the same is true of early childhood education. There is not just one way to enter the field. Some teachers enter the teaching profession after military service; others work in business or industry for several years and then decide that their true calling is to teach; and many others, perhaps like you, have always wanted to be a teacher because of the influence your teachers had on you.

The CDA Program
The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program is a competency-based assessment system that offers early childhood professionals the
FIGURE 1.5 Early Childhood Practitioner’s Professional Pathway for Oklahoma

Source: © 2008 Center for Early Childhood Professional Development, University of Oklahoma Board of Regents.
opportunity to develop and demonstrate competence in their work with children ages five and younger. Since its inception in 1975, the CDA program has provided a nationally recognized system that has stimulated early childhood training and education opportunities for teachers of young children in every state in the country and on military bases worldwide. The credential is recognized nationwide in state regulations for licensed centers as a qualification for teachers, directors, and/or family child care providers. The standards for performance that this program has established are used as a basis for professional development in the field.

The CDA program offers credentials to caregivers in four types of settings: (1) center-based programs for preschoolers, (2) center-based programs for infants/toddlers, (3) family child care homes, and (4) home visitor programs. Regardless of setting, all CDA candidates must demonstrate their ability to provide competent care and early educational practice in thirteen skill areas organized into six competency areas. Evidence of ability is collected from a variety of sources including firsthand observational evidence of the CDA candidate’s performance with children and families. This evidence is weighed against national standards. The CDA national office sets the standards for competent performance and monitors this assessment process so that it is uniform throughout the country.

**Associate Degree Programs**

Many community colleges provide associate degrees in early childhood education, which qualifies recipients to be child care aides, primary child care providers, and assistant teachers. For example, the Associate in Early Childhood Education program at St. Philips College in San Antonio, Texas, is designed to prepare students for a career working with children and families in a variety of work settings. The degree offers students early childhood opportunities in administration, staff training, social service, child advocacy, classroom instruction, as well as other child-related jobs. This AAS degree may transfer credits toward a bachelor’s degree in early childhood, child development, or human sciences. The AAS qualifies an individual for, but does not limit him or her to, positions as a lead teacher or director in an Early Head Start program, program coordinator, public school early childhood teacher, and assistant or staff development specialist.

**Baccalaureate Programs**

Four-year colleges provide programs that result in early childhood teacher certification. The ages and grades to which the certification applies vary from state to state. Some states have separate certification for pre-kindergarten programs and nursery schools; in other states, these certifications are “add-ons” to elementary (K–6, 1–6, 1–4) certification. At the University of South Florida, the age three through grade three teacher certification program includes coursework and extensive field experiences in early childhood settings to enable students to integrate theory with teaching practice.

**Alternative Certification Programs**

Many professionals enter the teaching profession after they have a baccalaureate degree in another field, such as finance, psychology, biology, or English. These individuals don’t need another bachelor's degree. What they need is the pedagogical knowledge and skills necessary to be a highly effective teacher. To fulfill this need for a different pathway to the teaching profession, many states, school districts, and private agencies offer alternative certification programs. Alternative certification programs are routes to teacher certification through which an individual who already has at least a bachelor’s degree can obtain certification to teach without necessarily having to go back to college and complete a college-based teacher education program. These alternative teacher training programs are sponsored by colleges of education, state departments of education, and for-profit agencies.
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Master’s Degree Programs

Depending on the state, individuals may advance their learning and/or gain initial early childhood certification at the master’s level. Many colleges and universities offer master’s programs for professionals who want to qualify as program directors or assistant program directors or who want to pursue a career in teaching. In addition, others may use the master’s degree to pursue their lifelong dream of teaching after spending several years in another profession. For example, Mary Ladd graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business and worked for five years in a high-tech company. However, she kept feeling a call to teach and satisfy her desire to work with young children. Mary earned a master’s degree and teacher certification and now teaches first grade in an urban setting, where she enjoys helping young children learn to read.

Your Ongoing Professional Development

You will find throughout your career that the majority of your professional development will occur through other pathways than formal education. For example, the teachers at Bunnell Elementary at Daytona Beach, Florida, participate in a program called Teachers Teaching Teachers. In this program, teachers visit other teachers’ classrooms and observe, up close and personal, other teachers’ techniques and teaching practices. Topics teachers are involved in range from dealing with behavior issues and preventing bullying to teaching inductive and deductive reasoning. Abra Seay, a second grade teacher who developed the Teachers Teaching Teachers program, says, “Professional development is absolutely critical!” More than likely you will be involved in similar kinds of teacher-led programs designed to introduce new ideas and sharpen teaching skills.41

Academic Coaching. The chances are good too that when you take your first job or move from one school to another, an academic coach, an experienced teacher with a strong knowledge of providing instruction in a specific area such as math, science, reading, or technology, will help you improve your instructional skills by advising and supporting you with instructional materials and offer guidance on planning and assessment. For example, new teachers at Northwest (Texas) Independent School District work with technology academic coaches Cathy Faris and Carla Burkholder who help them integrate technology into their instructional practices.

DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Professional practice entails teaching with and from a philosophy of education, which acts as a guidepost to help you base your teaching on what you believe about children.

A philosophy of education is a set of beliefs about how children develop and learn and what and how they should be taught. Your philosophy of education is based in part on your philosophy of life. What you believe about yourself, about others, and about life determines your philosophy of education. For example, we previously talked about optimism. If you are optimistic about life, chances are you will be optimistic for your children, and we know that when teachers have high expectations for their children, they achieve at higher levels. Core beliefs and values about education and teaching include what you believe about children, what you think are the purposes of education, how you view the teacher’s role, and what you think you should know and be able to do.
In summary, your philosophy of education guides and directs your daily teaching. The following guidelines will help you develop your philosophy of education.

Read

Read widely in textbooks, journals, and on the Web to get ideas for your philosophy. For example, these are some of the short philosophies of education from teachers of the year in Lee County, North Carolina:

Lisa Howard, second grade teacher: “It is my belief that the goal of education is to provide students with the tools necessary to achieve success. Through guidance and nurturing, teachers can empower students to become positive contributors to our society.”

Candace Bloedorn, third grade teacher: “I believe that every child has the ability to learn. As an educator, I hope to create an environment where children are able to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them. I hope to inspire and motivate our twenty-first century learners by incorporating technology and providing instruction that is meaningful and hands-on.”

Donna Thomas, first grade teacher: “Every child is unique and special. My role is to facilitate learning while guiding students toward self-discovery in an environment that is conducive to positive physical, social, cognitive, and emotional growth in an accepting, caring, supportive, and safe environment that encourages every child to reach his/her fullest potential.”

Reflect

As you read through and study this book, make notes and reflect about your philosophy of education. The following prompts will help you get started:

• I believe the purposes of education are . . .
• I believe that children learn best when they are taught under certain conditions and in certain ways. Some of these are . . .
• The curriculum, all of the activities and experiences of my classroom, should include certain “basics” that contribute to children’s social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. These basics include . . .
• Children learn best in an enriched environment that is healthy, respectful and challenging. Features of a good learning environment are . . .
• Children live and breathe in a technological age. My feelings about integrating technology in my teaching include . . .
• All children have certain needs that must be met if they are to grow and learn at their best. Some of these basic needs are . . .
• Some ways I can meet children’s needs are . . .
• All teachers should have certain qualities and behave in certain ways. Qualities I think important for teaching are . . .

Discuss

Discuss with successful teachers and other educators their philosophies and practices. The personal accounts in the Professionalism in Practice boxes in each chapter of this text are evidence that a philosophy can help you be a successful, effective teacher. They also serve as an opportunity to “talk” with successful professionals and understand how they translate theory into practice.
Write

Once you have thought about your philosophy of education, write a draft and have other people read it. Share your ideas through Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. In fact, creating a class blog about philosophies of education is a good way to get you and your classmates involved. Writing and sharing your philosophy will help you clarify your ideas and redefine your thoughts, because your philosophy should be understandable to others (although they do not necessarily have to agree with you!).

Evaluate

Finally, evaluate your philosophy using this checklist:

- Does my philosophy accurately relate my beliefs about teaching? Have I been honest with myself?
- Is it understandable to me and others?
- Does it provide practical guidance for my teaching?
- Are my ideas consistent with one another?
- Does what I believe make good sense to me and others?

Now finalize your draft into a polished copy. A well-thought-out philosophy will be like a compass throughout your career. Keep in mind that your philosophy of education will change and evolve as you grow as a professional. My philosophy of education constantly changes as I think about and reflect on classroom teaching, as I read and review new research, and as I engage in professional activities with my colleagues. The same will be true for you. Ongoing, continuous professional and personal development is expected as you constantly reflect on and engage in teaching young children and collaborating with their families and your colleagues. You will have many twists and turns in your career, but your philosophy will point you in the right direction and keep you focused on doing your best for all children.

NEW ROLES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

The role of the early childhood professional today is radically different from what it was even five years ago. Although the standards of professionalism and the characteristics of the high-quality professional remain the same, responsibilities, expectations, and roles have changed. Let’s examine some of these new roles of the contemporary early childhood professional.

- **Teacher as instructional leader.** Teachers have always been responsible for classroom and program instruction, but this role is now reemphasized and given a much more prominent place in what early childhood teachers do, such as planning for what children will learn, guiding and teaching so that children learn, assessing what children learn, and arranging the classroom environment so that children learn. Today, the instructional emphasis is on each child’s learning and achievement.

- **Intentional teaching of district and Common Core State (CCS) standards.** Intentional teaching occurs when instructors teach for a purpose, are clear about what they teach, and teach so that children learn specific knowledge and skills. In this context, teachers spend more time during the day actually teaching and make a conscious effort to be more involved in each child’s learning process. Intentional
teaching can and should occur in a child-centered approach for specified times and purposes throughout the school day.

- **Performance-based accountability for learning.** Teachers today are far more accountable for children’s learning than at any other time in American history. Previously, the emphasis was on the process of schooling. Teachers were able to explain their role as “I taught Mario how to. . . .” Today the emphasis is on the learning that takes place, such as “What did Mario learn?” and “Did Mario learn what he needs to know and do to perform at or above grade level?”

- **Teaching of reading, math, science, and technology.** Although the teaching of reading has always been a responsibility of early childhood professionals, the instructional role of today’s teachers has been expanded and includes an emphasis on math, science, and technology.

- **Increased emphasis on linking assessment and instruction.** Today, all teachers use the results of assessment to plan for teaching and learning. Assessment and planning are an essential part of the teaching-learning process.

- **New meaning of child-centered education.** Early childhood professionals have always advocated child-centered education and approaches. However, today there is a rebirth of child-centered education processes. Essential to the child-centered approach are the ideas that each child can reach high levels of achievement, that each child is eager to learn, and that children are capable of learning more than many people previously thought they could learn. A new concept of child-centeredness embraces the whole child in all dimensions: social, emotional, physical, linguistic, and cognitive.

**Integration of Early Childhood and Special Education**

The ongoing integration of early childhood education and early childhood special education is a seismic shift in the profession. This integration will continue to occur and I predict will be complete by 2015. I anticipate that future teachers will receive more special education training and that you, as a practicing professional, will undergo considerable professional development to help you be a more effective teacher in your inclusive classroom. Today, teaching in the inclusive classroom is the new normal.

The number of children with disabilities being identified is growing rapidly. It is estimated that 2.8 million children in public schools have a disability of some kind. Your role as an early childhood professional includes using instructional strategies and ideas integrated from the field of special education. Another of your roles, regardless of the grade you teach, is to ensure that all children receive all the benefits of federal and state laws designed to ensure that all children, regardless of ability or disability, receive educational services according to their needs.

**TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TEACHERS**

Twenty-first century teachers are knowledgeable about a wide range of subjects, collaborate with their colleagues, teach so children learn, and engage in continuing their professional development. Figure 1.6 identifies other skills of the twenty-first century teacher.

**Highly Effective Teachers**

There are many qualities that make up highly effective teachers. Some of these are included in the Applying Research to Practice feature.
Teaching in Early Childhood Today

As the field of early childhood continues to change, the details of your role as an early childhood professional will continue to be refined. You will want to devote the time and energy necessary to keep yourself in the forefront of your field.

My purpose in writing this book is to support your professional development from the stage where you are—novice or midlevel to highly skilled expert. The professional development checklist in Figure 1.7 is a powerful tool you can begin to use now to achieve this goal. The Desired Professional Competencies come from a number of sources: the Professional Standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the initial certification standards for early childhood certification of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), National Teachers of the Year, National Board Certified teachers, and professors of early childhood education.
Highly Effective Teachers

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, teacher expertise has a direct correlation to high student achievement. “Students who have highly effective teachers three years in a row score as much as 50 percentile points higher on achievement tests than those who have ineffective teachers for three years in a row,” states Linda Darling-Hammond. Effective teachers “know the content they are teaching, engage students in learning, and challenge them to greater accomplishments.”

Today, in many cases, students’ knowledge is summarized as a test score, and teachers’ effectiveness is perceived as their contribution to that test score. Although student scores on standardized tests can be useful gauges of a teacher’s effect, they should not be the sole criteria. Test scores do not give a full picture of teacher contributions and student circumstances, not to mention which students get tested and on what content.

Defining teacher effectiveness is not about creating a simplistic, single view of effective teaching. “It is a dramatic conceptual shift,” says ASCD executive director Gene Carter, “from focusing exclusively on the teacher to focusing on the act of learning.” The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ) suggests extending the definition of teacher effectiveness “beyond teachers’ contribution to student achievement gains to include how teachers impact classrooms, schools, and their colleagues as well as how they contribute to other important outcomes for students.”

So what does this mean to you?
Teacher effectiveness consists of five dimensions:

- Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help them learn, as demonstrated on tests, teacher assessments, and self-assessments.
- Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.
- Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress, adapt instruction as needed, and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.
- Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.
- Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure students’ success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk of failure.

Defining teacher effectiveness as the sum of multiple parts means education communities will need to employ multiple measures to evaluate different aspects of teacher effectiveness.
# Seventeen Competencies for Becoming a Professional: A Professional Development Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAEYC Standard</th>
<th>Desired Professional Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td><strong>Promoting Child Development and Learning</strong> I use my understanding of young children's characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children's development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td><strong>Delivering Education and Child Care</strong> I am familiar with a variety of models and approaches for delivering education and child care, and I use this knowledge to deliver education and child care in a safe, healthy learning environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td><strong>Guiding Behavior</strong> I understand the principles and importance of behavior guidance. I guide children to be peaceful, cooperative, and in control of their behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td><strong>Theories of Early Childhood Education</strong> I understand the principles of each major theory of educating young children. The approach I use is consistent with my beliefs about how children learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td><strong>Building Family and Community Relationships</strong> I know about, understand, and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. I use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and to involve all families in their children's development and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td><strong>Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families</strong> I know about and understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment. I know about and use systematic observations, documentation, and other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence the development of each child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td><strong>Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families</strong> I use my knowledge of children and families, developmentally effective approaches, and academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate learning experiences for all children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td><strong>Educating Diverse Students</strong> I understand that all children are individuals with unique strengths and challenges. I embrace these differences, work to fulfill special needs, and promote tolerance and inclusion in my classroom. I value and respect the dignity of all children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td><strong>Developmentally Appropriate Practice</strong> I understand children's developmental stages and growth from birth through age 8, and use this knowledge to implement developmentally appropriate practice. I do all I can to advance the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of the children in my care to their full potential.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td><strong>Technology</strong> I am technologically literate and integrate technology into my classroom to help all children learn.</td>
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<td>Standard 5</td>
<td><strong>Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum</strong> I understand the importance of developmental domains and academic (or content) disciplines in early childhood curriculum. I know the essential concepts, inquiry tools, and structure of content areas, including academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen my understanding. I use my own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula that promote comprehensive developmental and learning outcomes for every young child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td><strong>Becoming a Professional</strong> I identify and conduct myself as a member of the early childhood profession. I know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. I am a continuous, collaborative learner who demonstrates knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on my work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. I am an informed advocate for sound educational practices and policies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td><strong>Ongoing Professional Development</strong> I have a professional career plan for the next year. I engage in study and training programs to improve my knowledge and competence, belong to a professional organization, and have worked or am working on a degree or credential (CDA, AA, BS, or BA). I strive for positive, collaborative relationships with my colleagues and employer.</td>
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FIGURE 1.7 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Accomplishment? (Circle One)</th>
<th>If High, Provide Evidence of Accomplishment</th>
<th>If Needs Improvement, Specify Action Plan for Accomplishment</th>
<th>Target Date of Completion of Accomplishment</th>
<th>See the following for more information on how to meet the Desired Professional Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13</td>
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<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<td>High</td>
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<td>Chapters 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 and all chapters’ Technology Tie-In features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<td>Chapter 12</td>
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<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<td>Chapters 3 and 4</td>
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<td>Chapters 2, 11, and 13 and all chapters’ Diversity Tie-In features</td>
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<td>Needs Improvement</td>
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<td>Chapters 1 and 6</td>
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<td>Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13</td>
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(continued)
Standard 6  Philosophy of Teaching  I have thought about and written my philosophy of teaching and caring for young children. My actions are consistent with this philosophy.

Standard 6  Keeping Current in an Age of Change  I am familiar with the profession's contemporary development, and I understand current issues in society and trends in the field. I am willing to change my ideas, thinking, and practices based on study, new information, and the advice of colleagues and professionals.

Standard 6  Professional Dispositions  I work with students, families, and communities in ways that reflect the dispositions expected of professional educators as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. I recognize when my own dispositions may need to be adjusted and am able to develop plans to do so.

Standard 6  Historical Knowledge  I am familiar with my profession's history, and I use my knowledge of the past to inform my practice.

ACTIVITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ethical dilemma

"It isn’t fair; she got a bigger raise than I did!"

Emily Johnson is a kindergarten teacher in Madison Hills School District. Last year, the district adopted a performance-based salary system based in part on student achievement scores and on criteria assessed through the principal's classroom observations. Emily just received her notification of her salary increase for next year. When she compared her salary increase to her friend Kim’s salary increase, Emily was flabbergasted and shocked. Kim’s raise was twice as much as Emily’s raise, despite the fact that Emily’s children scored higher on the state achievement test. When Emily talked with her principal about her pay raise compared to Kim’s, the principal responded, “My classroom observation scores in Kim’s classroom were much higher than yours. I thought she did an outstanding job, so I rewarded her for it.”

What should Emily do? Should she ask for a specific written explanation as to why the principal gave higher scores to Kim and not to her? Should Emily remain quiet and try to do better next year? Or should Emily pursue another course of action? What would you do?
FIGURE 1.7 Continued

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<tr>
<th>Level of Accomplishment? (Circle One)</th>
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Note: These professional development outcomes are consistent with the core values of the NAEYC and the competencies of the CDA.


**Application Activities**

1. You can learn a great deal about what is involved in being a high-quality early childhood educator by reading the biographies of National Teachers of the Year. Go to the website of the Council of Chief State School Officers (www.ccsso.org) and read the biographies of National and State Teachers of the Year. Make a list of the characteristics and dispositions that you think make them effective teachers. From your list, choose three characteristics/dispositions and tell how you will incorporate them into your professional development plan. Post your ideas on your class discussion board or blog and ask for your classmates’ comments and feedback.

2. One thing is for certain: All of the six standards for becoming an early childhood education professional are extremely important. Rank the six standards in the order that you think is most important for you and your professional development. For example, which do you think is the most important standard? Write a short paragraph about why you rank-ordered the six professional standards in the order you chose. Post your rank ordering and your paragraph on your class discussion board and ask your colleagues for feedback.
3. Access the NAEYC website (www.naeyc.org/about/positions.asp) and review the Developmentally Appropriate Practice position statement. Give three specific examples of how you will apply DAP to your teaching so that children learn at high levels. Use the professional development checklist and a daily/monthly planner to develop your professional development plan for the next year. First, list your career development goals and then, on a monthly basis, specify activities, events, and other ways that you will achieve these goals. For example, in addition to attending classes at a local community college, Rosa Vaquerio plans to read a book a month on a topic related to teaching (see books for suggested reading in the chapters of this book).

4. Return to the website for the Council of Chief State School Officers (www.ccsso.org) and review philosophies of education for national and state teachers of the year. Follow the steps outlined in the chapter for developing your own philosophy of education. Develop a “rough draft” of your philosophy of education and post it online for your classmates to review and provide feedback.

5. The roles of early childhood professionals are constantly changing. Review the nine characteristics of the twenty-first century teacher, as shown in Figure 1.6. For each characteristic, tell what you will do to prepare yourself so that you can be a twenty-first century teacher. Develop a presentation in Prezi (www.prezi.com) and volunteer to present your Prezi to your class.

**Linking to Learning**

**Council for Exceptional Children Professional Standards**
www.cec.sped.org

**International Society for Technology in Education National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers**
www.iste.org

**Code of Ethical Conduct Position Statement**
www.naeyc.org
MyEducationLab

Go to Topic 12 (Professionalism/Ethics) in the MyEducationLab (www.myeducationlab.com) for your course, where you can:

- Find learning outcomes for Professionalism/Ethics along with the national standards that connect to these outcomes.
- Complete Assignments and Activities that can help you more deeply understand the chapter content.
- Apply and practice your understanding of the core teaching skills identified in the chapter with the Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units.
- Access video clips of CCSSO National Teachers of the Year award winners responding to the question, “Why Do I Teach?” in the Teacher Talk section.
- Hear viewpoints of experts in the field in Professional Perspectives.
- Check your comprehension on the content covered in the chapter by going to the Study Plan in the Book Resources for your text. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access Review, Practice, and Enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content.

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- Check your comprehension on the content covered in the chapter by going to the Study Plan in the Book Resources for your text. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access Review, Practice, and Enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content.
NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation

**Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning**
I use my understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning, to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for each child.¹

**Standard 6. Becoming a Professional**
I identify and conduct myself as a member of the early childhood profession. I know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice. I am a continuous, collaborative learner who demonstrates a knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspective on my work, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. I am an informed advocate for sound educational practices and policies.²

**ISSUES INFLUENCING THE PRACTICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

We hear a lot about change. America wants change from its elected officials. America also wants change in its schools and the way children are educated. This national demand for change is based on the many economic and social problems facing our nation such as poverty, low school achievement rates, and how to implement the latest research in educational practice. The call for educational change is a result of the many problems facing children and schools.

Child abuse; childhood diseases such as obesity, asthma, and lead poisoning; low-quality child care and education; and society’s inability to meet the needs of all
children are perennial sources of controversy and concern. New ideas and issues relating to the education and care of young children keep the field of early childhood education in a state of constant change. In fact, change is one constant in the field of early childhood education. As a result, you will be continuously challenged to determine what is best for young children and their families as you meet the demands of society today as an early childhood professional.

You are part of the solution, making it possible for all children to achieve their full potential. Politicians and the public look to you and your colleagues to help develop educational solutions to social and political problems. Teacher of the Year Tina Repetti Renzullo says, “I view teaching as a form of activism in support of our country. It is with great pride of purpose that I approach each school day. My efforts in developing the knowledge and talents of the children in my community provide economic and social benefits of enduring value. I am grateful for and humbled by the trust my country and my community places in me. I honor that confidence in my resolve to ensure that my students learn not only the foundations of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also the value and promise their education holds for the future.”

And as Anthony Mullen, Connecticut Teacher of the Year, notes, “. . . the greatest institution for social change is the school and the greatest instrument of change is the teacher. No other democracy created by man to promote the welfare of all people has ever existed. Schools and teachers have always been the catalyst for human progress because knowledge and learning have created the world in which we live.”

So, in the spirit of creating change in response to social and educational issues, let’s examine some issues in early childhood and consider how you can respond to them.

**Children of the Great Recession**

Throughout the course of their in-school and out-of-school lives, children’s successes and achievement are greatly influenced by their family’s socioeconomic status (SES). SES consists of three broad but interrelated measures: parents’ education levels, parents’ employment status, and family income. These three measures, acting individually and as an integrated whole, influence (1) how children are reared; (2) family–child interactions; (3) home environments and the extent to which they do or do not support language development and learning; (4) the kind and amount of discipline used; and (5) the kind and extent of future plans involving children’s education and employment.

**The Current SES Status of Children and Families.** The headline says it all: “Poverty Rate Hits 18-year High as Median Income Falls.” Forty-six million people live in poverty—that’s 15.1 percent of the population! Twenty-one percent of young children live in poor families. Currently the federal poverty level is $23,050 for a family of four. This gives you some idea of the circumstances that poor children and their families face. When I ask my university students to consider whether or not they could—or would want to—live in a family of four whose income is less than $23,050, not one student answers affirmatively. No one wants to be poor, but we have so many children and families who are. We should not bestow the label of poor or the conditions that go with being poor on any of our nation’s children.

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**FOCUS QUESTIONS**

1. What are critical, contemporary issues that influence the practice of early childhood education?
2. What can I do to promote cultural diversity in my classroom?
3. How can I prevent violence, bullying, and abuse in my classroom?
4. How can I be politically aware and keep current in the rapidly changing field of early childhood education?
As we examine in closer detail the numbers behind the stark poverty statistics, we find that the number of children who live in poverty in America is on the increase:

- Since 2000, the number of children living in poverty has increased by 3.8 million.\(^8\)
- The number of children who fell into poverty between 2008 and 2009 was the largest single-year increase ever recorded.\(^9\)
- One out of nine American children, or 8.1 million children, are living with an unemployed parent.\(^10\) Children whose parents are unemployed are at increased risk for experiencing poverty, homelessness, and child abuse.\(^11\)

**Children Living with Grandparents.** Another consequence of the Great Recession is that the devastating effects of poverty cascade through children’s and families’ lives with intergenerational consequences. One child in ten in the United States lives with a grandparent.\(^12\) Several conditions confound the ability of grandparents to raise their grandchildren. Many grandparents have limited resources, with one in five—20 percent—living in poverty!\(^13\) In addition, many grandparents are unfamiliar with how to parent a new generation of children. The demands of the contemporary curriculum and the behavioral challenges of contemporary schooling frequently overwhelm them. It is important to connect grandparents with the resources to help raise their grandchildren.

**Latinos and Blacks.** Increasing poverty in the United States is especially hard on historically impoverished cultural groups. The number of Hispanic children in poverty jumped by 36 percent from 2007 to 2011.\(^14\) Hispanics suffered in the Great Recession in part because they were heavily employed in industries like housing that experienced sharp declines. Poverty is especially hard on black and Latino males and adversely affects their life outcomes, leading to higher rates of delinquency and poorer health.\(^15\)

**Decreasing Support for Schools.** Unfortunately, as poverty increases, support for America’s schools, especially inner-city and low-income neighborhood schools, decreases. Because of the nature of school finance systems in the United States, schools in poor neighborhoods tend to have far less money per pupil than do schools in wealthier districts. Unfortunately, and to children’s detriment, school districts in the United States systematically assign less experienced, less qualified, and less effective teachers to schools with poor students.\(^16\)

Neglecting America’s children is not the answer. John Dewey said, “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child . . . that must be what the community wants for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely.”\(^17\)

**Solutions to the Great Recession.** So what can we—you and I—do? Here are some programs and solutions that you and other early childhood professionals can embrace and advocate for:

- **Community and neighborhood-based parenting education programs** help assure that all children are ready and eager to learn at their entrance to preschool and kindergarten. Such programs should include home visiting, activities, parenting education classes, and linking families to safety-net programs such as health care benefits, food-based programs such as food stamps, vouchers and coupons, and rent and utility subsidies.
- **High-quality, universal (available for all children), full-day preschool** paid for by tax dollars. I have long argued that we should provide public-supported, high-quality preschool programs through public schools and community-based agencies as a means of helping all children succeed and learn.

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**poverty** The state of a person who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.
The development of a pre-K–12 continuum of education. Historically and unfortunately, preschool is often left out of any discussion of the K–12 continuum of education services and programs. One of the best things that could happen to pre-K is to be included in discussions of and funding for the K–12 continuum on education.

Full-day, full-year services. Parents want full-day, full-year services for their children because such programs fit with parents’ work schedules and lifestyles. Working parents in particular find it difficult to patch together child care and other arrangements when their children are not in school. Parents also believe that full-day, full-year services support and enhance their children’s learning. Parents want their children to do well academically. Hopefully, we will see more full-day, full-year early childhood programs of all kinds in the years to come!

School readiness. There is and will continue to be an increase in programs designed to provide families, grandparents, and others with child development information, parenting skills, and learning activities that will help them get every child ready for school. Working with parents to help them get their children ready for learning and school is an important and growing part of early childhood services and your responsibility as an early childhood professional.

Early literacy learning. There is a growing awareness of the critical role literacy plays in school and life success. Consequently, today there is a great emphasis in all early childhood programs on teaching literacy skills and reading.

The challenges of the Great Recession are monumental both domestically and internationally. We as professionals cannot bypass or ignore the children of the Great Recession. We must seek every opportunity to make sure that the children of the Great Recession are not neglected, left out, or left behind.

As we are bombarded by such data about the severity of the Great Recession on children and families, you, other early childhood professionals, and I must maintain an optimistic spirit and attitude regarding how best to serve the nation’s young children even in tough times. We must conduct advocacy for young children and their families to ensure they have the services and the programs necessary to help each child reach his or her potential.

The Achievement Gaps

Perhaps the most devastating of all achievement gaps are those related to pervasive poverty. The achievement gaps among students of different income levels are severe. Compared to their peers from higher-income families, infants and toddlers from low-income families score lower on cognitive assessments, are less likely to be in excellent or very good health, and are less likely to receive positive behavior ratings at both nine and twenty-four months old. Impoverished students are roughly two years of learning behind the average better-off students of the same age. The income achievement gap appears early and persists over a student’s lifetime.\(^{18}\)

Achievement gaps are the difference in performance between low-income and minority students, students of different genders, and students with different levels of income achievement gap.

The achievement gap among students of different income levels.

Achievement gaps are the difference in performance between low-income and minority students, students of different genders, and students with different levels of maternal education, compared to that of their peers.
The Ongoing Decline of Child Well-Being in the United States

As we have discussed, the Great Recession has had a serious impact on children in the United States. Projections are that tough times are still ahead for children of the Great Recession. More children will have two parents who are unemployed. Fewer children will enroll in pre-kindergarten programs, and fewer teenagers will find jobs. More children are likely to commit suicide, be overweight, and be victimized by crime.19 Unfortunately, researchers believe these dire consequences of the Great Recession for children will persist well into the future. The long-term effects of the Great Recession on children mean that:

- As more families fall below the poverty line, increasing numbers of children will be left behind at the schoolhouse door. These children’s preparedness for school will be well below that of their more advantaged peers from wealthier families. For many children of the Great Recession, inequality begins at birth.
- As states scramble for ways to fund entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, public sector health benefits, and so on, more states will underfund or fail to fund existing preschool programs and will delay or indefinitely postpone funding for new preschool programs. This means more preschool-age children will not have the chance to attend preschool, thus denying them opportunities to participate in early literacy and reading programs that can help ensure their individual success and their ability to read on grade level by grade three.
- When children enter school already behind their peers, they will continue to do less well, and the potential for their ongoing failure and eventual dropping out of school increases.
- For the United States, the effects of the Great Recession on children may jeopardize efforts to make America’s children more globally competitive and keep the country economically competitive in a global society.
- The number of children experiencing food insecurity is on the increase as more families sink into poverty. Food insecurity occurs when all family members do not have access at all times to safe and nutritious food to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.20

The achievement gap also influences individual outcomes. There is a demonstrable link between early performance in school and subsequent rates of high school graduation, college attendance and completion, and ultimately earnings. The less education children have, the more likely they are as adults to be incarcerated, a smoker, obese, uninsured, and not vote.23

Maternal Education Achievement Gap. The maternal education achievement gap describes the differences in achievement of children with mothers of higher education compared to children of mothers with lesser education. For example, compared to infants whose mothers have a BA or higher, infants and toddlers whose mothers have less than a high school diploma score lower on both cognitive and behavioral measures. They are also less likely to be in excellent or very good health and less likely to have a secure attachment to their mother. The disparities are usually small at nine months of age, but grow to be moderate or large disparities by twenty-four months of age.24

Gender Achievement Gap. There has long been a prevailing idea that science, math, and athletic-based classes are considered to be “masculine” subjects. Teachers, parents, and students all hold this belief. The idea that when girls excel at math, it is due
to hard work, and that when boys excel at math, it is due to natural talent, still persists. Teachers are reported to show preferential treatment of boys in math classes. As a result, there is a high participation gap in math and science subjects between genders. The math achievement gap between girls and boys remains. This has created a shortage of girls in science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM-related classes and later on in scientific career fields (which produce more income than female-dominated fields). In addition, for black boys, the gender achievement gap is severe. By grade four, only 11 percent of black males in large city schools are proficient in reading.

Research informs us that teacher expertise has a direct correlation to high student performance and eliminating achievement gaps. Students who have highly effective teachers three years in a row score as much as 50 percent higher on achievement tests than those who have ineffective teachers for three years in a row. Effective teachers "know the content they are teaching, engage students in learning, and challenge them to greater accomplishments." As a highly effective teacher, here are some things you could do to help close the achievement gaps:

- Teach for achievement. Today’s teachers are intentional teachers who have high expectations for their students and want them to achieve high standards.
- Differentiate (teach in response to the diverse needs of students so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively regardless of differences in ability) instruction so all children learn. Angelica L. Jordan, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA's) Teacher of the Year, believes that “effective teachers spend time building relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. When I know a student’s likes, dislikes, and interests, I can differentiate lessons.”
- Assess each student’s academic strengths and weaknesses.
- Incorporate the learning style of each student in your lesson plans and teaching.
- Communicate with parents as partners in the education process.

**BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**

The brain plays a powerful and important role in growth and development. It is no wonder, then, that brain research and the implementation of that research have focused a great deal of interest on the first three years of life. Research on the brain has enormous implications for early childhood education and public policy. Brain research provides a strong basis for making decisions about what programs to provide for young children, as well as what environmental conditions promote optimal child development. Brain research also underscores the importance of early experiences and the benefits of early intervention services, thus pointing toward a positive economic return on investments in young children.

Public interest in the application of brain research to early childhood education has intensified. In many cases that research affirms what early childhood educators have always intuitively known: good parental care, warm and loving attachments, and positive age-appropriate stimulation from birth onward make a tremendous difference in children’s cognitive development for a lifetime. Let’s review some interesting facts about infant and toddler brain development and consider the implications they have for your practice as a professional.

**The Brain**

The brain is a fascinating and complex organ. Anatomically, the young brain is like the adult brain, except it is smaller. The average adult brain weighs approximately 3 pounds. At birth, the infant’s brain weighs 14 ounces; at six months, 1.31 pounds;
and at three years, 2.4 pounds. So you can see that during the first two years of life the brain undergoes tremendous physical growth. The brain finishes developing at about age ten, when it reaches its full adult size.

At birth, the brain has one hundred billion neurons, or nerve cells, which is the total amount it will ever have! It is important for parents, you, and other caregivers to play with, respond to, interact with, and talk to young children because this is the way brain connections develop and learning takes place. As they are used repeatedly, brain connections become permanent. However, brain connections that are not used or used only a little may wither away. This withering away is known as neural shearing or pruning. This helps explain why children who are reared in language-rich environments do well in school, while children who are not reared in such environments may be academically at risk.

Also, by the time of birth, these billions of neurons have formed over fifty trillion connections, or synapses, through a process called synaptogenesis, the proliferation of neural connections. This process will continue to occur until the age of ten. The experiences that children have help form these neural connections. Experiences count. If children don’t have the experiences they need to form neural connections, they may be at risk for poor developmental and behavioral outcomes. In this regard, remember that while experiences count, not all experiences are equal. Children need high-quality experiences that contribute to their education and development. Such high-quality experiences can include talking, reading and singing to and with children, helping children to develop good peer relationships, and helping children talk with an increasingly larger vocabulary.

In addition, children need the right experiences at the right times. These “right times” are known as critical periods. Critical periods represent a narrow window of time during which a specific part of the body is most vulnerable to the absence of stimulation or to environmental influences. For example, the critical period for language development is the first year of life. It is during this time that the auditory pathways for language learning are formed. Beginning at birth, an infant can distinguish the sounds of all the languages of the world. But at about six months, through the process of neural shearing or pruning, infants lose the ability to distinguish the sounds of languages they have not heard. By twelve months, their auditory maps are pretty well in place. It is literally a case of “use it or lose it.” An infant whose mother or other caregiver talks to her is more likely to have a larger vocabulary than an infant whose mother doesn’t talk to her.

Having the right experiences at the right time also relates to broad, developmental “windows of opportunity” or sensitive periods during which it is easier to learn something than it is at another time. Sensitive periods represent a less precise and often longer period of time when skills, such as acquiring a second language, are influenced. However, if the opportunity for learning does not arise, these potential new skills may be lost forever. They may be harder to learn or they may not be learned fully. During the last decade, scientists and educators have spent considerable time and energy exploring the links between brain development and classroom learning. Brain research provides many implications for how to develop enriched classrooms for children and for how to engage them in activities that will help them learn and develop to their optimal levels. Most importantly, brain research has made educators aware of the importance of providing young children stimulating activities early in life.

Applying Brain Research to Your Teaching

Brain research also tells us a great deal regarding stimulation and the development of specific areas of the brain. For example, brain research suggests that listening to music and learning to play musical instruments at very early ages stimulate the brain...
areas associated with mathematics and spatial reasoning. In addition, brain research suggests that gross-motor activities and physical education should be included in a child's daily schedule throughout the elementary years. Regrettably, school systems often cut programs such as physical education and music in times of budget crisis, even though research shows that these programs are essential to a child's complete cognitive development. Physical activities and exercise are essential for good physical health just as mental activities are essential for cognitive growth.

**Brain-Based Guidelines for Teaching.** Reflect on the following conclusions about children's development and consider the brain-based implications they have for your teaching:

1. Child development is shaped by a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience. For example, the years from birth to age eight are extremely important environmentally, especially for nutrition, stimulation of the brain, affectionate relationships with parents and others, and opportunities to learn. Think for a moment about how other kinds of environmental influences—such as family, school, and friends—affect development.

2. Culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in child-rearing beliefs and practices designed to promote healthy adaptations. For example, the kinds of foods parents feed their children, the ways they discipline, and their beliefs about the importance of education are based on cultural beliefs and customs.

3. The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behavior. For example, children learn to regulate their behaviors with the help of parents and teachers who provide help in controlling their behavior and who guide them in making good choices.

4. Children are active participants in their own development, reflecting the intrinsic human drive to explore and master one's environment. This drive to explore is especially evident in toddlers' constant exploring and “getting into things.”

5. Child-adult relationships and the effects of these relationships on children are the building blocks of healthy development. For example, children whose parents read to them develop positive attitudes toward and happy memories of reading.

6. The timing of early childhood experiences is important. However, children remain vulnerable to risks throughout the early years of life and into adulthood. For example, much of what represents a threat to healthy brain development involves what we call toxic stress, resulting from chronic negative stressors such as child abuse, neglect, and lack of love and affection. We know that the presence of these stressors can change brain chemistry and affect behavior. This is why you and other professionals must help protect children from stress and harm.

**Wellness and Healthy Living**

As you know, when you feel good, life goes much better. The same is true for children and their families. One major goal of all early childhood programs is to provide for the safety and well-being of children. A second goal is to help parents and other family members provide for the well-being of themselves and their children. Poor health and unhealthy living conditions are major contributors to poor school achievement and life outcomes. A number of health issues facing children today put their chances for learning and success at risk. Figure 2.1 shows ways that early childhood professionals work with children and their families to improve their overall health, well-being, and school achievement.
Dental Caries. Dental caries (tooth decay) remains the most prevalent chronic disease in both children and adults, even though it is largely preventable. Forty-two percent of children two to eleven have had dental caries in their primary teeth and 23 percent have untreated dental caries. Black and Hispanic children and those living in families with lower incomes have more untreated decay. Providing children the dental health they need should be a huge priority for society and the early childhood profession. Some things you can do to promote children’s dental health include the following:

- Provide parents with information about the importance of tooth brushing and flossing. Some of my university students are surprised to learn that tooth brushing begins with the first tooth!
Remind children of the importance of brushing and flossing by reading stories, dramatic play, and other activities.

Encourage parents to cut back on and reduce the amount of carbonated beverages and candy that their children consume.

Provide time in the daily schedule for children to brush and floss their teeth, especially after meals and snacks.

Invite dental hygienists to present programs on the dos and don’ts of good dental health.

Asthma. Asthma, a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways, is also one of the most prevalent childhood illnesses in the United States. An estimated 7.1 million children under the age of eighteen suffer from asthma; 4.1 million children suffer from an asthma attack or episode every year. Asthma is caused in part by poor air quality, dust, mold, animal fur and dander, allergens from cockroaches and rodent feces, and strong fumes. Many of these causes are found in poor and low-quality housing. You will want to reduce asthma-causing conditions in your early childhood programs and work with parents to reduce the causes of asthma in their homes. Here are some things you can do to reduce the causes of asthma: (1) Reduce or remove as many asthma and...
allergy triggers (such as smoke, mold, pet dander, cockroaches, and strong fumes or odors) as possible from homes and programs. And speaking of pet dander, 90 percent of U.S. homes have pet dander even though only 50 percent have a pet. This can be a problem for asthmatic children.44 (2) Use air filters and air conditioners—and properly maintain them. (3) Keep in mind that vacuum cleaners with poor filtration and design characteristics release and stir up dust and allergens.45

Lead Poisoning. Lead poisoning is also a serious childhood disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that approximately 250,000 U.S. children between birth and age five have dangerous blood lead levels.46 Lead enters the body through inhalation and ingestion. These children are at risk for low IQs, short attention spans, reading and learning disabilities, hyperactivity, and behavioral problems. A major source of lead poisoning is from old lead-based paint in many older homes and apartments; most homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint in them. The federal government banned the use of lead in paint in 1978, but paint with lead has a sweet taste that children like, so it is not uncommon for them to eat chips of paint and to scratch a tooth on window sills.47 Across the United States many homes are near the sites of former lead factories. The soil in these areas is so contaminated with lead that it poses grave risks to the children who play in it—yet many do. You can access information and maps about lead contamination from old factories in the Linking to Learning section at the end of this chapter. Young children are especially vulnerable since they put many things in their mouths and crawl on floors.

Childhood Diabetes. Diabetes is fast becoming one of the most common childhood diseases.48 There are two types of diabetes in children. Type 1 diabetes, usually diagnosed in children and young adults, was previously known as juvenile diabetes. In Type 1 diabetes the body does not produce insulin.49 In Type 2 diabetes the body produces insufficient amounts of insulin or does not adequately use the insulin that is produced. What is so alarming about the increased incidences of Type 2 diabetes in children is that it is usually an adult disease, more frequently diagnosed beginning in middle adulthood. Reasons for the increase in Type 2 diabetes include increasing childhood obesity, poor eating habits, and an emphasis on high-calorie and sugary foods and drinks. Preventive measures for Type 2 diabetes go hand in hand with efforts to reduce childhood obesity, mainly healthy diets and regular (daily) exercise.50

Obesity. Today’s generation of young children is often referred to as the “Supersize Generation,” due to their obesity. In fact, the Supersize Generation is getting younger! The American Heart Association reports that more than nine million children between the ages of six and nineteen are considered overweight; 11.5 percent of children between the ages of six months and twenty-three months are overweight; and nearly 14 percent of preschool children between the ages of two and five are overweight. Among American children two to nineteen, 17.6 percent are overweight.51 Additionally, the tipping point for early childhood obesity begins in infancy. More and more obesity prevention programs are geared toward infants and toddlers.52

In addition, new waves of research report the relationship of obesity to other diseases and health problems, especially later in life. Excess weight in childhood and adolescence predicts weight problems in adults. Overweight children, ages ten to fourteen, with at least one overweight or obese parent, are reported to have an 80 percent likelihood of being overweight into adulthood.53 Obesity can also cause heart problems. Research reveals that children who are substantially overweight throughout much of their childhood and adolescence have a higher incidence of depression than those who aren’t overweight. There were several significant findings related to this research. First, a link was shown between obesity and psychiatric disorders. Second, researchers found that boys were at greater risk than girls for weight-related depression.54
The dramatic rise in obesity is due to a combination of factors, including less physical activity and more fat and calorie intake. More children spend more time in front of televisions and computer screens, and fewer schools mandate physical education. Also, restaurant promotions to "supersize" meals encourage high-fat and high-calorie diets. Studies suggest that a ban on fast-food advertisements on television, especially those targeting young children, could reduce the number of overweight children by as much as 18 percent. Although it is unlikely that such a ban will ever materialize, the study does demonstrate how advertising food and childhood obesity are linked.55

As the rate of obesity in American children continues to rise, it is especially important for you to keep yourself healthy and to model healthy habits for the children you teach to ensure that they have a good role model as encouragement to develop healthy nutritional habits.

Here are some ways you can help children and parents win the obesity war:

• Provide parents with information about nutrition. What children eat—or don’t eat—plays a major role in how they grow, develop, and learn. Diet also plays a powerful role in whether or not children engage in classroom activities with energy and enthusiasm. For example, send home copies of MyPlate for Kids (see Figure 2.2). You can log on to MyPlate for Kids using the Web address in the Linking to Learning section at the end of this chapter and individualize a food “plate” for each of your children.

  You can also send this information home to parents and share with them how to access and use the MyPlate nutrition guide in order to serve healthy meals to their families.

• Encourage your children to eat breakfast and for parents to provide breakfast for their children. Also, investigate your school's lunch and breakfast programs. If your program does not serve breakfast to children, you can advocate for a breakfast program for children whose families' incomes make them eligible for federal- and state-supported nutrition programs. Research is very clear that serving breakfast to children who do not get it elsewhere significantly improves their cognitive abilities; this enables them to be more alert, pay better attention, and do better in terms of reading, math, and on standardized test scores.56

• Counsel parents to pull the plug on the television. TV watching at mealtime is associated with obesity because children are more likely to eat fast foods such as pizza and salty snack foods while they watch TV. Also, children who watch a lot of television tend to be less physically active, and inactivity tends to promote weight gain.57

• Cook with children and talk about foods and their nutritional values. Cooking activities are also a good way to eat and talk about new foods. Cooking and other nutrition-related activities are ideal ways to integrate math, science, literacy, art, music, and other content areas.

• Integrate literacy and nutritional activities. Reading and discussing labels is a good way to encourage children to be aware of and think about nutritional information. For example, calories provide energy; too much fat and sugar are not good for us; and protein is important, especially in the morning.58

• Provide opportunities for physical exercise and physical activities every day.

For their part, schools are fighting the obesity war in the following ways:

• Banning the sale of sodas and candy bars in school vending machines during lunch hours59
• Banning bake sales and other fundraising activities involving non-nutritious foods.
• Teaching about and encouraging healthier lifestyles in and out of school
• Including salad bars as part of their cafeterias (e.g., in California, the Riverside Unified School District Farm to School Program is designed to promote healthy eating in children by increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables in school lunches and providing nutrition education to increase knowledge of and improve attitudes toward eating a variety of locally grown produce).60
• Banning cupcakes and other sweets at class birthday parties and being urged to consider healthier snack choices for homeroom celebrations61
• Restoring recess and physical education to the elementary school curriculum
• Working with parents to help them get their children to be more active and to eat healthier foods at home

The First Lady’s Let’s Move! Project is a federal program that encourages healthy living. Let’s Move! is a comprehensive initiative launched by First Lady Michelle Obama, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, Let’s Move! is about putting children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years by giving parents helpful information and:

• Fostering environments that support healthy choices
• Providing healthier foods in our schools
• Ensuring that every family has access to healthy, affordable food
• Helping kids become more physically active

The goal of this program is to reduce childhood obesity from 20 percent to 5 percent by 2030. In order to achieve this, Let’s Move! also includes recommendations for fighting early childhood obesity, including the following:

• Educate and help women conceive at a healthy weight and have a healthy weight gain during pregnancy.
• Encourage and support breastfeeding.
• Educate and support parents in efforts to reduce kids’ screen time (i.e., less time watching television and using digital media and more time being physically active).
• Improve federal early childhood programs’ child nutrition and physical activity practices.62

You can access Let’s Move! with the Web address found in the Linking to Learning section at the end of this chapter.

PROVIDING FOR DIVERSE CHILDREN AND CULTURES

There are many words such as standards, testing, and accountability that highlight education today. Add diversity of children to your list! Nowhere is America’s diversity more apparent than in Census data.

Shifting Demographics

Across the United States, seismic demographic changes herald how diverse populations are transforming regional geographic areas, states, school districts, and schools. In several states, non-Hispanic white children account for less than half of the general population of children. The nine states (and Washington, DC) with a “minority
majority” child population are Hawaii (87 percent); Washington, DC (83 percent); New Mexico (74 percent); California (73 percent); Texas (66 percent); Arizona (58 percent); Florida (54 percent); Maryland (54 percent); Georgia (53 percent); and Mississippi (51 percent). Eight of these states are Sun Belt states. As a result, the South is the first region in the country where more than half of public school students are poor and where more than half are members of minorities. This shift is fueled by an influx of Latinos and other ethnic groups; the return of African Americans to the South; and higher birthrates among African American and Latino families.63

In addition, the Census Bureau reports that for the first time in U.S. history, minority babies are now the majority. The census also reveals that 50.4 percent of children under age one are Hispanic, black, Asian, or some other minority group. This means that for many of you, by the time you graduate, these children will be in your preschool or kindergarten. The numbers also herald the future of the United States as a whole, as minority students are expected to exceed 50 percent of all public school enrollment by 2020, and the share of students poor enough to qualify for free or reduced price lunches will continue to rise.64

The changing demographics of the United States means more students will require special education, bilingual education, and other special services. Issues of culture and diversity shape instruction and curriculum. These demographics also have tremendous implications for how you teach and how your children learn.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

**Multicultural awareness** is the appreciation for and understanding of people’s cultures, socioeconomic status, and gender. It also includes understanding one’s own culture. Cultural awareness programs and activities focus on other cultures while making children aware of the content, nature, and richness of their own. Learning about other cultures while children are learning about their own culture enables them to integrate commonalities and appreciate differences without inferring inferiority or superiority of one or the other. Promoting multiculturalism in an early childhood program has implications far beyond your school, classroom, and program. Multiculturalism influences and affects work habits, interpersonal relations, and a child’s general outlook on life. Early childhood teachers take these cultural influences into consideration when designing curriculum and instructional processes. One way to accomplish the primary goal of multicultural education—to positively change the lives of children and their families—is to infuse multiculturalism into early childhood activities and practices.

**Multicultural Infusion**

**Multicultural infusion** means that culturally aware and sensitive education permeates the curriculum to alter or affect the way young children and you think about diversity issues. In a larger perspective, infusion strategies are used to ensure that multiculturalism becomes a part of the entire center, school, and home. Infusion processes foster cultural awareness; use appropriate instructional materials, themes, and activities; teach to children’s learning styles; and promote family and community involvement.

**Fostering Cultural Awareness.** Keep in mind that you are the key to a cultural classroom. These guidelines will help you foster cultural awareness:

- **Recognize that all children are unique.** Children have special talents, abilities, and styles of learning and relating to others. Make your classroom a place in which children are comfortable being who they are. Always value uniqueness and diversity.
• Get to know, appreciate, and respect the cultural background of each child. Visit families and community neighborhoods to learn more about cultures, religions, and the ways of life they engender. For example, Teacher of the Year María Márquez says, "In today’s diverse society, a teacher must be aware and sensitive to the multicultural differences in order to better understand and encourage the individual child to achieve to his/her highest potential. In the teaching of citizenship and character traits, I strive to help each child learn to share the concern for the well-being and dignity of others. They must learn to demonstrate loyalty and pride toward our country. They must also be responsible, courteous and honest toward others with whom we share our values."

• Use authentic situations to provide for cultural learning and understanding. For example, a field trip to a culturally diverse neighborhood of your city or town provides children an opportunity for understanding firsthand many of the details about how people live. Such an experience provides wonderful opportunities for involving children in writing, cooking, reading, and dramatic play activities. What about setting up a replica of a local market in your classroom?

• Use authentic assessment activities to assess fully children’s learning and growth. Portfolios are ideal for assessing children’s learning in nonbiased and culturally sensitive ways.

• Infuse culture into your lesson planning, teaching, and caregiving and make it a foundation for learning. Use all subject areas—math, science, language arts, literacy, music, art, and social studies—to relate culture to children’s lives and cultural backgrounds. This approach makes students feel good about their backgrounds, cultures, families, and experiences.

• Be a role model by accepting, appreciating, and respecting other languages and cultures. In other words, infuse multiculturalism into your personal and professional lives.

• Be knowledgeable about, proud of, and secure in your own culture. Children will ask about you, and you should be prepared to share your cultural background with them.

Using Appropriate Instructional Materials. Carefully consider and select appropriate instructional materials to support the infusion of cultural education in your classroom. Here are some suggestions for achieving this goal.

• Multicultural literature. Choose literature that embraces similarities and welcomes differences regarding how children and families live their whole lives.

• Themes. Select and teach thematic units that help strengthen children’s understanding of themselves, their culture, and the cultures of others. Here are some appropriate theme topics, all of which are appropriate for meeting Common Core standards and the standards of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS):

  • Getting to know myself, getting to know others
  • What is special about you and me?
• Growing up in the city
• How is my state similar to and different from other states?
• Tell me about Africa (or South America, China, etc.)

• *Personal accomplishments.* Add to classroom activities, as appropriate, the accomplishments of people from different cultural groups, women of all cultures, and individuals with disabilities.

When you select materials for use in a cultural curriculum for early childhood programs, make sure you do the following:

• Represent people of all cultures fairly and accurately.
• Include people of color, many cultural groups, and people with exceptionalities.
• Verify that historical information is accurate and nondiscriminatory.
• Ensure gender equity—that is, boys and girls are represented equally and in non-stereotypic roles.

**Promoting Family and Community Involvement.** You will work with children and families of diverse cultural backgrounds. As such, you will need to learn about the cultural background of children and families so that you can respond appropriately to their needs.

It is important for you to understand that each family and child is unique. Don’t assume families hold particular values and beliefs just because they speak a particular language or are from a different country of origin. Take time to discover the actual values, beliefs, and practices of the families in your community.

You will teach children from different cultures whose first language is not English. educating students with diverse backgrounds and special needs makes for a challenging and rewarding career. Learning how to constantly improve your responses to students’ special needs and improve learning environments and curricula will be one of your ongoing professional responsibilities. Society, families, and children change as diversity increases, and as more students with special needs come to school, you will have to change how and what you teach. The accompanying Professionalism in Practice Competency Builder provides seven strategies for becoming a successful teacher of linguistically and culturally diverse children. Your students are waiting for you to make a difference in their lives!

**TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM**

Now that you have read about public policy and current issues affecting children who are typically developing in early childhood today, let’s look at one issue that conjures many policy implications as well as an issue about which many early childhood teachers have questions: inclusion, typically defined as educating children with and without disabilities in the same classroom. While the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have identified inclusion as the preferred service delivery option for young children with special needs, there is no agreement on a model for developing and delivering these services. A classroom template for inclusion is not available, but it is essential that teachers believe that preparing all children to function in society is best achieved by creating environments that include children whose diversity includes varying abilities, disabilities, and backgrounds.
My ongoing attempt to learn Spanish provides me with a lot of empathy for English language learners (ELLs)! Perhaps you have had the same experience that I have of frustration with comprehension, pronunciation, and understandable communication. English language learners face these same problems. Many come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Others come to this country lacking many of the early literacy and learning opportunities we take for granted.

INCREASING NUMBERS

Many school districts across the country have seen their numbers of English language learners skyrocket. For example, in 2010, the Texas Education Agency reported there were 831,812 ELLs in K–12 programs throughout the state. Over 120 languages were represented; 90 percent (744,949) were Spanish speakers. Prominent languages other than Spanish were Korean, Vietnamese, Urdu, and Arabic.

The chances are great that you will have English language learners in your classroom wherever you choose to teach. Here are some strategies that Judith Lessow-Hurley, author of *Foundations of Dual Language Instruction* (5th ed.), suggests you use for helping your English language learners be successful:

**STRATEGY 1** Develop Content Around a Theme

The repetition of vocabulary and concepts reinforces language and ideas and gives English language learners better access to content.

- Provide a word wall or word bank for students to display the vocabulary associated with the theme being studied. Use pictures to explain vocabulary whenever possible.
- Provide a variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking experiences around the theme.
- Include higher-order thinking skills, such as evaluating, synthesizing, and application for children to think about and problem-solve.

**STRATEGY 2** Use Visual Aids and Hands-On Activities in Your Instruction

Children retain information better when you involve their senses in learning.

- Rely on visual cues (pictures, etc.) as frequently as possible.
- Have students create flash cards for key vocabulary words. Be sure to include enough time in your lessons so students can use their vocabulary words.
- Encourage students to use computer programs and books with CDs or DVDs.
- Use rubrics (scoring and performance guides) with pictures to help students learn what is expected of them.
- Use visual aids and hands-on activities in your instruction. English language learners benefit from illustrations, manipulatives, and real experiences that provide clues to meaning and support their language development.
- Engage children in learning activities they enjoy. Create opportunities for children to talk about things that they find interesting, motivating and exciting. Scaffold and build their academic language and they will learn English and grow academically, too.

**STRATEGY 3** Use Routines to Reinforce Language

Use routines in your classroom. Repetition allows students to tie language to what’s happening around them. Routines also increase children’s comfort level of learning a new language because they can know what to expect. Language acquisition is easier in low stress environments. For example, start your school day with a morning routine that includes counting the children present, noting the day of the month, and talking about the weather, etc.

- Use daily reading with pictures, gestures, and a dramatic voice to help convey meaning.

Once teachers support the philosophy of inclusion, they must be able to plan for and provide for the needs of the diverse children in their classroom. Creating a successful inclusive environment requires a well-planned and well-organized classroom. Teachers who plan and evaluate the different aspects of the classroom setting can construct classrooms that meet the needs of all students. You will gradually gain the skills, awareness, and dispositions to do this. The following list provides some examples of ways to create, implement, evaluate, and modify classrooms so optimal learning conditions are created for all students:
• Provide "scripts," instructions for a set of actions, by tying language to content, instead of simply trying to teach language in isolation. For example, engage children in role plays where they act out common activities such as lining up, going to the cafeteria, recess, or going to the zoo. Teach useful language frames like, “Can you help me find the bathroom?”
• Remember that there is a distinction between the language children use on the playground and academic language—the language they need to succeed with tasks they encounter in school. Teachers need to consciously and carefully scaffold academic language. For example, before you ask children to retell a story, teach words like “first,” “then,” and “after.”

**STRATEGY 4 Engage English Language Learners with English Speakers**

Cooperative learning groups, composed of children with mixed language abilities, give students a meaningful content for using English.

• Use cooperative learning. Cooperative learning groups usually assist your children of different achievement levels—in this case language ELLs need English role models to help them learn English. Language learning requires interaction. You want to get your students talking. **Cooperative learning** creates a context for students to converse about meaningful ideas. Pairs work, too—pair ELLs with English speakers in a variety of activities. Small groups (four or less) and pairs promote interaction. Remember, learning is social and good language learning environments are not quiet and involve student interaction!

• Make language learning fun. Children don’t learn language because they think they want a career in international marketing. They learn language because they want to talk, make friends, and do the things that children do.

**STRATEGY 5 Allow Students to Use Nonverbal Responses**

Permit students to demonstrate their knowledge and comprehension in alternative ways. For example, one teacher asks her children to hold up cardboard “lollipops” (green or red side forward) to indicate a yes or no answer to a question.

• Allow students to draw pictures to demonstrate their understanding. They can explain about their picture to a small group. Remember, a picture is worth 1,000 words!

• Don’t correct all nonstandard responses. It’s better to get students talking; they acquire accepted forms of language usage and communication through regular use and practice. You can always paraphrase a student’s answer to model Standard English.

**STRATEGY 6 Use Technology**

You can use technology to scaffold language development of ELLs. Technology is student centered and gives students some control over their own learning. Focus on technological tools and activities. For example:

• Use iPods as voice recorders so children can hear themselves read and talk. When students are able to record and hear themselves read and talk, they become more engaged and motivated to learn English.

• English Language Development teacher Amy Wegener Taganashi says, “An array of technology helps engage students and provides the structured one-on-one English practice they need. . . . Software, online tools, and other technologies help students hone basic language skills they can later apply in authentic social settings. The kids spend most of their day listening and not interacting with the language as much. But technology mixes things up, captures students’ attention, and engages them in a way traditional classroom instruction doesn’t.”

**STRATEGY 7 Respect, Preserve, and Honor Children’s Culture**

Encourage students to preserve their cultural identity as they are learning English.

• Have children show their countries of origin on a world map, then talk and write about it.

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*Strategy 4: Engage English Language Learners with English Speakers*

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- Have children show their countries of origin on a world map, then talk and write about it.
• **Classroom curriculum.** Classroom curriculum that is appropriate for all children does not mean each child will do the same things every day. The curriculum must include activities that can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of each child.

• **Classroom management.** Teachers must support and encourage appropriate behavior, prevent inappropriate behavior, and guide or redirect misbehavior when it does occur. In the inclusive classroom, you can achieve this goal by creating a positive management plan that addresses skill deficits. A **skill deficit** is the inability to perform a skill because the child does not possess the skill. For example, a child with a disability may have a social skill deficit associated with making friends and gaining popularity. Motivational deficits involve the unwillingness or lack of cooperation of children to perform a skill they possess, either entirely or at an appropriate level. For example, some children may be reluctant or hesitant to engage in an activity because of their disability. In contrast, some children may lack motivational self-control and may be aggressive and intrusive in their behavior.

• **Grouping.** The inclusive classroom can include heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping, depending on the activity. Teachers must have explicit individual behavioral and academic expectations for each child depending on his or her needs.

• **Physical arrangement.** In the early childhood classroom, the four-desk cluster provides the most opportunities for students with disabilities to be included in the classroom. Teachers can move efficiently from child to child, and socialization, cooperation, and group work are optimized.

• **Rules.** Rules should be stated positively, limited in number, observable, measurable, and applied to behavior only. Rules should not address academic or homework issues that could unfairly impact students with disabilities or who are linguistically diverse.

• **Transitions.** Strategies that support smooth transitions between activities include verbal cues (e.g., 5 minutes before cleanup), visual cues (e.g., picture schedules), auditory cues (e.g., timers), and praise after successful transitions.

Teachers who actively prepare for all students are better able to provide accommodations, supports, and instruction where needed.

### PREVENTING VIOLENCE, BULLYING, AND ABUSE

Every day news reports are full of graphic accounts of how children are abused, abandoned, neglected, bullied, and treated inhumanely.

#### Violence

Violence seems to pervade American society. From television to video games to domestic violence, children are exposed to high doses of undesirable behavior. Children experience violence, both directly and indirectly, in these ways:

• Every day in the United States, ten young children are murdered, sixteen killed in firearm accidents, and 8,042 are reported as physically abused. 68

• Over three million children per year witness domestic violence in their homes. 59

• Children in poverty are twenty-two times more likely to be physically abused and sixty times more likely to die from the abuse than those in the middle class. 70
By the time they reach middle school, children will have watched 100,000 acts of violence through television, including 8,000 depictions of murder.77

On average, school-age children play video games fifty-three minutes per day; 49 percent of video games feature serious violence, and 40 percent show violence in a comic way.78

Research shows that violent behavior is learned and that it is learned early.79 Your students’ brains are remarkably plastic, or capable of being molded or adapted to conditions; the neurons are still arranging and rearranging connections. Brain plasticity usually works to children’s advantage, because it enables them to learn and develop in spite of poor influences, allowing us to redirect neural pathways away from violence and toward amiable and peaceful conflict resolution. However, when children are routinely and repeatedly exposed to violence, their emotions, cognition, and behavior become centered on themes of aggression and violence.

### Does *SpongeBob SquarePants* Impair Kids’ Thinking?

A recent research study raises the issue of whether fast-paced cartoons such as *SpongeBob SquarePants* are good for young children. The study differentiates between naturally paced children’s programs, such as *Sesame Street*, slow-paced programs, such as *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, and fast-paced programs, such as *SpongeBob SquarePants*.71 Fast-paced programing is associated with the “overstimulation hypothesis” that is based on the theory that fast pacing and sequencing of programs may tax children’s brains (or parts of the brain). In this study, the researchers examined the effects of *SpongeBob SquarePants* on children’s executive functions (EF), a collection of skills and behaviors including attention, working memory, inhibitory control, problem solving, self-regulation, and delay of gratification.72

The researchers found that children who watched nine minutes of *SpongeBob* had executive function impairment immediately after viewing the cartoon, compared with children who were assigned a drawing task and those who watched educational television.73 The researchers advised that “it is important that parents are alert to the possibility of lower levels of EF in your children at least immediately after watching such shows.”74

### WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Not everyone agrees that cartoons are necessarily detrimental to children or that fast-paced cartoons affect children’s executive function. However, you can do the following:

- Advise parents that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of two should not watch any television and that they recommend only one to two hours of educational, nonviolent television for older children.75 Although the research study discussed above was conducted with four-year-old children, your advice to parents could include the recommendation that they limit the television viewing of their preschool children as well.
- Communicate with parents about the nature and kind of television cartoons children watch and alert parents to the fact that fast-paced cartoons may have an immediate influence (after watching the shows) on children’s ability to demonstrate the behaviors included in executive function.
- Advise parents about age-appropriate content. Not all children’s programs are made for all children. For example, the producers of *SpongeBob* say the program is designed for children ages six to eleven, not four-year-olds. Parents have to be vigilant in monitoring their children’s television viewing behavior.76 Advise parents that they cannot assume that all cartoons are equal and not all are of high quality.
Increasing acts of violence lead to proposals for how to provide violence-free homes and educational environments; how to teach children to get along nonviolently with others, such as by using puppets to discuss feelings with younger children or by role-playing and discussing appropriate ways to behave on the playground with older children; and how to reduce violence on television, in the movies, and in video games. Advocating for reducing violence on television, for example, in turn leads to discussions for ways to limit children’s television viewing. Such proposals include “pulling the plug” on television; using the V-chip, included in every TV, which enables parents to block programs with violent content; boycotting companies whose advertisements support programs with violent content; and limiting violence shown during prime-time viewing hours for children. Here are some other steps you can take to prevent or reduce violence in children’s lives:

- Show children photographs and have children identify various emotions; discuss appropriate responses to these emotions.
- Have children role-play how to respond appropriately to various emotions.
- Discuss with your students their behavior and the clear logical consequences of that behavior.
- Have children involved in disagreements discuss with one another the feelings that caused their actions and think about how they could have done things differently.
- Discuss violence openly in your classroom. Be honest about the repercussions of violence. Focus on the pain and humiliation it causes. For example, if you are reading a book in class in which the characters engage in violence, discuss how the victim felt, what the character could have done differently, and what they themselves would have done in the same situation.
- Send home information about media violence and encourage parents to monitor and limit screen time.

**Bullying**

All across the country, state legislatures have passed laws requiring schools to implement anti-bullying programs. In response, school activists have developed proactive programs such as that at Kate Schenck Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas. Each morning the children take an anti-bullying pledge and each Thursday the children wear anti-bullying T-shirts, both shown in Figure 2.3. The student council of Kate Schenck was instrumental in developing the pledge and designing the T-shirt.

Programs to prevent and curb bullying are another example of how educators are combating the effects of violence on children. Although in the past bullying has been dismissed as “normal” or “kids’ play,” this is no longer the case, because bullying is related to personal and school violence. Bullying includes teasing, slapping, hitting, pushing, unwanted touching, taking personal belongings, name-calling, and making sexual comments and insults about looks, behavior, or culture.

Here are some things you can do to help prevent bullying in your classroom:

- Talk to children individually and in groups when you see them engage in hurtful behavior. For instance: “Chad, how do you think Brad felt when you pushed him out of the way?”
- Be constantly alert to any signs of bullying behavior in your classroom and intervene immediately.
- Teach cooperative and helpful behavior, courtesy, and respect. Much of what children do, they model from others’ behaviors. When you provide examples of courteous and respectful behavior in your classroom it sets a good example for children.
• Have children work together on a project. Then, have the students talk about how they got along and worked together.
• Make children and others in your classroom feel welcome and important.
• Talk to parents and help them understand your desire to stop bullying and to have a bully-free classroom.
• Conduct a workshop for parents on anti-bullying behavior and for signs of bullying.
• Report bullying to your principal! Remember that if you are aware of bullying behavior and do nothing about it, then you have not done your job of protecting and advocating for every child.

FIGURE 2.3 Kate Schenck Elementary School, San Antonio, Texas, Bully Pledge and Bully T-Shirt
Source: Kate Schenck E.S. (SAISD) 2010 Student Council under the direction of Mary Martinez (4th grade teacher); revised by Assistant Principal Nora Mozingo.
• Teach your students the “talk, walk, and squawk” method (or some other method your school uses) in response to bullying. Role-play and practice this technique in class:
  
  • **Talk.** Encourage your students to stand up for themselves verbally: “Leave me alone” or “You don’t scare me” are some choices. Have children practice these responses in a calm and assertive voice.
  
  • **Walk.** Teach your students to walk away, but not to run away. If students run away, it is likely to increase the intensity of the bullying.
  
  • **Squawk.** The last step is to tell a teacher. Teachers can then take steps to halt the bullying behavior.81
  
• Keep parents informed of their child’s interactions with violence in school. If a child is a bully or is being bullied, tell the parents so that you and they can collaborate to remediate the situation.

• Read books about bullying. You can read books about bullying to and with your children during story time, group reading lessons, guided reading, and shared reading. You can also send books home for parents to read with their children. Some books you might want to read are the following:

  • **The Juice Box Bully** by Bob Sornson, Maria Dismondy, and Kim Shaw. Have you ever seen a bully in action and done nothing about it? The kids at Pete’s new school get involved instead of being bystanders. When Pete begins to behave badly, his classmates teach him about “The Promise.” Will Pete decide to shed his bullying ways and make “The Promise”?81

  • **The Savvy Cyber Kids: Defeat of the Cyber Bully** by Ben Halpert and Taylor Southerland. While playing an online game, CyberPrincess and CyberThunder encounter a cyber bully. Throughout the book, Tony and Emma learn strategies on how to appropriately respond to a bully online.

  • **Confessions of a Former Bully** by Trudy Ludwig and Beth Adams. After Katie gets caught teasing a schoolmate, she’s told to meet with Mrs. Petrowski, the school counselor, so she can make right her wrong and learn to be a better friend. Bothered at first, it doesn’t take long before Katie realizes that bullying has hurt not only the people around her, but hurt her, too.

  • **Jungle Bullies** by Steven Kroll and Vincent Nguyen. No one in the jungle will share. Elephant orders Hippo out of the pond and as Elephant is much bigger than Hippo, in turn Hippo orders Lion out of the path; Lion orders Leopard out of the grass; and Leopard orders Monkey off the branch of the tree. But Monkey’s mama has some very good advice about standing up for himself and teaching others how to share.

  • **Bullies Never Win** by Margery Cuyler and Arthur Howard. When the class bully, Brenda Baily, makes fun of Jessica’s skinny legs and her boyish lunch box, Jessica doesn’t know what to do. She doesn’t want to be a tattletale, but she also wants the bullying to stop. Can Jessica find the courage to stand up for herself?

**Cyber Bullying.** The widespread use of the Internet, iPhones, texting devices, and social networking sites has led to the development of a new type of bullying: cyber
bullying. **Cyber bullying** is the threatening, stalking, harassment, tormenting, and humiliation of one child by another through cell phones, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, chat rooms, blogs, texting, and picture messaging. Cyber bullying is often anonymous and sometimes occurs between cliques and a single victim. Cyber bullying occurs in females more frequently than males.\(^{82}\)

Here are some examples of cyber bullying:

- Sydney sent Emily an e-mail that said she was fat, stupid, and ugly.
- Mia Photoshopped a naked picture with Gina’s face and posted it on MySpace.
- Kiera posted a note in a popular after-school study group chat room that Shawna was the biggest _________ in the third grade.
- Jonathon sent Matt an e-mail calling him a nerd and a pointy head.
- Rebecca stole Ashton’s password and pretended to be Ashton, while saying derogatory remarks about another student in a chat room.

**How to Prevent Cyber Bullying.** Here are some ways to help prevent cyber bullying:

- Tell children the consequences of forwarding any type of electronic message.
- Discuss with children the dangers involved in posting and sharing their personal information online and through social media.
- Advise students that if they think they are being cyber bullied, they should log off; report the incident to their teachers and parents; and change their privacy settings on social networking sites.

Because most cyber bullying takes place outside the classroom, parents must take time to educate children about cyber bullying. Here are more steps that parents can take to prevent cyber bullying in their own homes:

- Understand what cyber bullying is and how technology can be used to bully others.
- Contact the Internet service provider to see what parental controls are offered.
- Monitor what children are doing.
- Talk to children about the online activity in which they are engaging.
- Notify school officials if there is an incident that involves the school.
- Save all harassing messages so they can be reported.
- Keep computers in a common area.
- Look for signs that a child may be a victim of cyber bullying.\(^{83}\)

Being aware of the different ways that you can prevent cyber bullying will help you become more knowledgeable about how to avoid this type of behavior in your classrooms. By learning about cyber bullying, you can provide children with different ways to appropriately use technology.

**Childhood Abuse and Neglect**

Many of our views of childhood are highly romanticized. We tend to believe that parents always love their children and enjoy caring for them. We also envision family settings full of joy, happiness, and harmony. Unfortunately for children, their parents, and society, these assumptions are not always true. In fact, the extent of child abuse is far greater than we might imagine. Annually there are 2 million referrals to child protective services (CPS) agencies involving the alleged maltreatment of about 5 million children.\(^{84}\)

Child abuse is not new; abuse—in the form of abandonment, infanticide, and neglect—has been documented throughout history. The attitude that children are the property of the parents partly accounts for this record. Parents have believed, and some still do, that they own their children and can do with them as they please.
Valid statistics are difficult to come by because definitions of child abuse and neglect differ from state to state and reports are categorized differently. Because of the increasing concern over child abuse, social agencies, hospitals, child care centers, and schools are becoming more involved in identification, treatment, and prevention of this national problem.

Public Law 93-247, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, defines child abuse and neglect as follows:

Physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby as determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the secretary.

In addition, all states have some kind of legal or statutory definition of child abuse and mistreatment, and many define penalties for child abuse.

Just as debilitating as physical abuse and neglect is emotional abuse, which occurs when parents, teachers, and others strip children of their self-esteem. Adults take away children's self-esteem by continually criticizing, belittling, screaming and nagging, creating fear, and intentionally and severely limiting opportunities. Because emotional abuse is difficult to define legally and difficult to document, the unfortunate consequence for emotionally abused children is that they are often left in a debilitating environment.

Figure 2.4 will help you identify abuse and neglect, both of which adversely affect children's growth and development.

Remember that the presence of a single abuse symptom or sign does not necessarily indicate abuse. You should observe a child's behavior and appearance over a period of time and generally be willing to give parents the benefit of the doubt about a child's condition. Moreover, we also want to make sure we are practicing and upholding the best interest and welfare of each child.

**Reporting Child Abuse.** As a teacher you are a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Other mandatory reporters include physicians, nurses, social workers, counselors, and psychologists. Each state has its own procedure and set of policies for reporting child abuse. You need to be familiar with your state and district policies about how to identify child abuse and how to report it.

The following guidelines should govern your response to a child with suspected abuse or neglect:

- Remain calm. A child may retract information or stop talking if he or she senses a strong reaction.
- Believe the child. Children rarely make up stories about abuse.
- Listen without passing judgment. Most children know their abusers and often have conflicted feelings.
- Tell the child you are glad that he or she told someone.
- Assure the child that abuse is not his or her fault.
- Do what you can to make certain that the child is safe from further abuse.
- Do not investigate the case yourself. Report your suspicions to your principal or program administrator or to the child and family services agency.

How child abuse is reported varies from state to state. In Washington, DC, for example, if child abuse or neglect is suspected, you are to call the reporting hotline immediately at 202-671-SAFE. To make a report, you would need to provide the following information:

- Name, age, sex, and address of the child who is the subject of the report; also the names of any siblings and of the parent, guardian, or caregiver.
### Physical Abuse

**Physical Indicators**
- Unexplained bruises and welts
  - On torso, back, buttocks, thighs, or face
  - Identifiable shape of object used to inflict injury (belt, electrical cord, etc.)
- Appear with regularity after absence, weekend, or vacation
- Unexplained burns
  - On soles of feet, palms, back, buttocks, or head
  - Hot water, immersion burns (glove-like, sock-like, or doughnut-shaped burn on buttocks or genitals)
- Unexplained fractures or dislocations
- Bald patches on scalp

**Behavioral Indicators**
- Child states s/he “deserves” punishment
- Fearful when others cry
- Behavioral extremes (aggressive, withdrawn)
- Frightened of parents or caretakers
- Afraid to go home
- Child reports injury by parents or caretakers
- Inappropriate/immature acting out
- Needy for affection
- Manipulative behaviors to get attention
- Tendency toward superficial relationships
- Unable to focus—daydreaming
- Self-abusive behavior or lack of concern for personal safety
- Wary of adult contact

### Sexual Abuse

**Physical Indicators**
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Tori, stained, or bloody undergarments
- Pain, swelling, or itching in genital area
- Pain when urinating
- Bruises, bleeding, or tears around the genital area
- Vaginal or penile discharge
- Sexually transmitted diseases
  - Herpes, crabs, vaginal warts
  - Gonorrhea, syphilis
  - HIV, AIDS
- Excessive masturbation

**Behavioral Indicators**
- Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education activities
- Sexual behavior or knowledge inappropriate to child’s age
- Sexual acting out on younger children
- Poor peer relations
- Delinquent or runaway behavior
- Report of sexual assault
- Drastic change in school performance
- Sleep disorders/nightmares
- Eating disorders
- Aggression; withdrawal; fantasy; infantile behavior
- Self-abusive behavior or lack of concern for personal safety
- Substance abuse
- Repetitive behaviors (hand-washing, pacing, rocking)

### Neglect

**Physical Indicators**
- Not meeting basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)
- Failure to thrive (underweight, small for age)
- Persistent hunger
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate dress for season or weather
- Consistent lack of supervision and emotional care
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs
- Abandonment

**Behavioral Indicators**
- Begging or stealing food
- Early arrival at or late departure from school
- Frequent visits to the school nurse
- Difficulty with vision or hearing
- Poor coordination
- Often tired or falling asleep in class
- Takes on adult roles and responsibilities
- Substance abuse
- Acting out behavior
- Educational failure
- Child verbalizes lack of care-taking

### Emotional Abuse

**Physical Indicators**
- Speech disorders
- Stuttering
- Baby talk
- Unresponsiveness
- Failure to thrive (underweight, small for age)
- Hyperactivity

**Behavioral Indicators**
- Learning disabilities
- Habits of sucking, biting, rocking
- Sleep disorders
- Poor social skills
- Extreme reactions to common events
- Unusually fearful
- Overly compliant behaviors (unable to set limits)
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Self-abuse
- Difficulty following rules or directions
- Child expects to fail so does not try

### FIGURE 2.4 Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Familiarize yourself with these signs of abuse and neglect. As an early childhood professional, it is your responsibility to be aware of and sensitive to children’s physical and emotional conditions and to report signs of child abuse and neglect.

- Nature and extent of the abuse or neglect, as you know it (and any previous abuse or neglect)
- Any additional information that may help establish the cause and identity of persons responsible
- Your name, occupation, contact information, and a statement of any actions taken concerning the child
Seeking Help. What can be done about child abuse? There must be a conscious effort to educate, treat, and help abusers and potential abusers. The school is a good place to begin. Federal agencies are another source of help. For information, contact any of the organizations listed in the Linking to Learning section at the end of the chapter.

POLITICS AND REFORM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The more early childhood is in the news, the more it generates public interest and attention; this is part of the political context of early childhood education. Whatever else can be said about education, it is political. Politicians and politics exert a powerful influence in determining what is taught, how it is taught, to whom it is taught, and by whom it is taught. Early childhood education is no exception. As a result, federal, state, and local policy makers are constantly counseling reforms and programs that will improve teaching and learning.

Federal and State Involvement in Early Childhood Programs

Federal and state funding of early childhood programs has greatly increased during the past decade. This trend will continue for several reasons. First, politicians and the public recognize that the early years are the foundation for future learning. Second, spending money on children in the early years is more cost effective than trying to solve problems in the teenage years. For example, the Federal Reserve Bank estimates that the returns on public investment in quality early childhood development programs for low-income children, in terms of reduced spending on public programs and increased tax payments, is 16 percent. Children who attend quality early childhood programs do better in school, are less likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system, and are more likely to own homes and have jobs as adults.

Expanded Federal Support for Early Childhood Education

Another reason for increased federal involvement in early childhood politics and programs relates to America’s stature and leadership on the global stage. The United States is a world leader in politics and education and wants to stay that way. Our country wants and needs highly educated citizens to remain competitive in the world. This is what President Obama believes about the role of education in keeping our nation internationally competitive:

“A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs but whether America can out-compete countries around the world. America’s business leaders understand that when it comes to education, we need to up our game. That’s why we’re working together to put an outstanding education within reach for every child.”

This effort to have a highly trained and highly skilled citizenry begins in the early years.

One of the most dramatic changes occurring in U.S. education today is the expanded role of the federal government in the funding for public education. More federal dollars are currently allocated for education than ever before.

Race to the Top (RTT). Race to the Top is a U.S. Department of Education competition among the 50 states for $4.35 billion in federal funding and is designed to spur systemic reform and embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning in America’s schools. The reforms contained in the Race to the Top will help prepare America’s students to graduate ready for college and career and enable them to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world.

Race to the Top emphasizes the following reform areas:

• Designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, by encouraging states to work jointly toward a system of common academic standards
that builds toward college and career readiness, and that includes improved assessments designed to measure critical knowledge and higher-order thinking skills

- Attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America’s classrooms, by expanding effective support to teachers and principals; reforming and improving teacher preparation; revising teacher evaluation, compensation, and retention policies to encourage and reward effectiveness; and working to ensure that our most talented teachers are placed in the schools and subjects where they are needed the most.

- Supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction, by fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system, assessing and using data to drive instruction, and making data more accessible to key stakeholders.

- Using innovation and effective approaches to turn around struggling schools, by asking states to prioritize and transform persistently low-performing schools.

- Demonstrating and sustaining education reform, by promoting collaborations between business leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps, and by expanding support for high-performing public charter schools, reinvigorating math and science education, and promoting other conditions favorable to innovation and reform.90

All of the above reforms are currently affecting early childhood programs and will continue to do so for a long time to come. For example, forty-four states and their local school districts and teachers are implementing the Common Core Standards, beginning in kindergarten. Every day, teachers use student assessment data to drive or guide their instructional processes.

The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge Grants (RTT–ELCG) are part of the federal government’s efforts to reform early childhood education. The U.S. Department of Education has provided a $500 million grant to states in a competition to reform preschool programs.

The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge supports the development of new approaches to raise the bar across early learning centers and to close the school readiness gap. States are working to build statewide systems of high-quality early learning and development for all early learning programs, including Head Start, public pre-K, child care, and private preschools. Key reforms include aligning and raising standards for existing early learning and development programs; improving training and support for the early learning workforce through evidence-based practices; and building evaluation systems that promote effective practices and programs to help parents make informed decisions.91

**Twenty-First Century Learning Skills**

Twenty-first century learning skills represent student outcomes necessary for the twenty-first century. Business leaders have identified skills and knowledge they think are essential for success in the workplace. Four components that describe twenty-first century skills and knowledge are the following:

- Core subjects and the twenty-first century themes (such as language arts, mathematics, science, global awareness, and financial literacy)
- Learning and innovation skills (such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, and problem solving)
- Information, media, and technology skills
- Life and career skills (such as initiative and self-direction)92

Essentially, these skills are ones necessary for living in a technological world and for living and working in a rapidly changing global society.

Changes in society constantly cause changes in the field of early childhood education. One of your major challenges as an early childhood teacher is to keep current in
terms of new directions in your field. In this way you will be able to judge what is best for young children and implement the best practices that will enable young children to succeed in school and life.

This is a great time for early childhood education and a wonderful time to be a teacher of young children. The federal government and the U.S. Department of Education continue to press for more legislation, funding, and increased awareness for early childhood education and programs. This context of constant change and progress provides you many opportunities to become more professional, and to ensure that all children learn the knowledge and skills necessary for success in school and life.

**ethical dilemma**

“Our children need recess!”

Third grade teacher Allison Renfo can’t believe the text message she received from her friend Courtney telling her their school board members are preparing to vote on a proposal to eliminate recess in the elementary grades next year. Allison agitatedly whipped out her cell phone and calls Courtney: “You’ve got to be kidding me; how can the board be so short-sighted? The board doesn’t have all the information they need to make such a decision! I just read a research report today that said that there is a clear link between obesity in early childhood and cardiovascular risk later in life. We were just talking the other day about how our children seem to be more obese than in previous years. Exercise is one way we can prevent obesity!” exclaims Allison. “Taking away recess in light of the national obesity epidemic just doesn’t make a lot of sense to me. We should do something about it.”

**What should Allison do?** Should Allison organize a flash mob through Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness about the board’s proposal? Should she organize a group to “Occupy the School Board” the night of the meeting? Or should Allison do nothing and hope the board votes against the proposal? What should Allison do? **What would you do?**

**Application Activities**

1. Think about problems that young children and their families face in education (e.g., children who have problems with reading or children with autism). Search the Internet and identify three agencies in your community that are available to intervene and assist families. List three ways that you as a teacher could work with these agencies to help your children and families. Post your ideas on your class discussion board.

2. Many young children live in diverse families. Conduct online research about the challenges of providing for different types of families. Think about diverse families, the challenges families face, and what you can do as an early childhood professional to support contemporary families. Log on to Twitter and share with a small group of classmates your findings through Twitter’s online website. To do this, go to www.twitter.com and type “diverse families” in the search box.

3. Think about and list five ways you can create a healthy and safe classroom for the grade level you plan to teach. Log on to Facebook and share your ideas with other classmates by creating an online blog. Take a look at the number of people that have viewed your blog and their comments. What do their comments tell you?

4. Reading online news is one way to keep up to date in a changing society and in a changing early childhood educational environment. In my early childhood classes, I electronically post (Twitter, class discussions, blogs, etc.) items that I refer to as “Early Childhood in the News.” My students respond by also posting articles they find interesting. Over a two-week period, blog, Tweet, and electronically post with
your classmates some “Early Childhood in the News” items that relate to a topic you are studying in class.

5. Over the next three or four months, keep an electronic journal about changes you notice in the field of early childhood. Include these topics:
   a. What changes intrigue you the most?
   b. Not all changes are for the better. Make a list of changes that you think have a negative effect on children (e.g., rising poverty).
   c. Document or identify three things you personally and professionally can do in response to changes in society and education.

Linking to Learning

USA Today—Ghost Factories

www.ghostfactories.usatoday.com
Collection of comprehensive investigative reports on contaminated soil and the effects of children’s play in these contaminated areas

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov
A service of the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps coordinate and develop programs and policies concerning child abuse and neglect

Childhelp USA

www.childhelp.org
Handles crisis calls and provides information and referrals to every county in the United States; hotline 1-800-422-4453 or 4-A-CHILD

Let’s Move!

www.letsmove.gov
A national initiative founded and run by First Lady Michelle Obama to bring awareness of obesity and dramatic change in obesity rates within one generation

U.S. Department of Agriculture—MyPlate

www.choosemyplate.org
Provides useful information on current nutrition guidelines, illustrating the five essential food groups for a healthy diet using the image of a dinner plate

MyEducationLab

Go to Topic 3 (Family/Community) in the MyEducationLab (www.myeducationlab.com) for your course, where you can:

- Find learning outcomes for Family/Community along with the national standards that connect to these outcomes.
- Complete Assignments and Activities that can help you more deeply understand the chapter content.
- Apply and practice your understanding of the core teaching skills identified in the chapter with the Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units.
- Check your comprehension on the content covered in the chapter by going to the Study Plan in the Book Resources for your text. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access Review, Practice, and Enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content.