P R E F A C E

Overview

The Whole Child is a practical methods book for foundational or introductory courses in early childhood education. It explains how to teach and care for young children from infancy through Grade 3 in ways that foster healthy development. It helps preservice teachers understand what children need from the learning environment in order to thrive. For that reason, it focuses on the child and pictures him or her as composed of a number of selves: the physical self, the emotional self, the social self, the cognitive self, and the creative self.

A Focus on the Domains: The Five Selves

The discussion of the physical self includes not only large- and fine-muscle development but also how to best handle routines because such things as eating, resting, and toileting contribute much to physical comfort and well-being. For the emotional self, the book considers ways to increase and sustain mental health, to cope with crises, to use guidance to foster self-control, to cope with aggression, and to foster self-esteem. Included for the social self are ways to build social concern and kindness and learning to value the cultures of other people. The cognitive, or intellectual, self is considered in terms of language and literacy development, the development of reasoning and thinking skills via the emergent approach, and the development of specific reasoning abilities. Finally, the creative self covers the areas of self-expression through the use of art materials and creativity as expressed in play and applied in thought.

 The Whole Child is based on the premise that physical and emotional health are fundamental to the well-being of children, that education must be developmentally appropriate if that well-being is to prosper, and that children need time to be children—time to be themselves, to do nothing, to stand and watch, and to repeat again what they did before. In short, they need time to live in their childhood rather than rush through it. If we offer the young children we teach rich and appropriate learning opportunities combined with enough time for them to enjoy and experience those opportunities to the fullest, we will enhance childhood, not violate it.

New to This Edition

- New information on designing the *classroom environment* to serve as an educational method that teaches to the five selves of the child as well as a visual example of a well-designed preschool classroom

- Over *100 new photos* taken in real classrooms, giving teachers a view of what teaching *really* looks like

- A new *Teacher Talk* feature highlighting key ideas through the statements of mentor teachers

- *"What the Research Tells Us,"* which presents current research studies in a way that allows teachers to understand them and apply them in the classroom

- New information on *the project approach* and the use of webbing

- *Graphics* that illustrate important concepts so students can visually learn more challenging content

- New content in Chapter 16 that helps students apply educational theories to themselves (as well as to the children) to set their career path in becoming "The Whole Teacher"

Continuing Features

- Material is presented in a warm, practical approach based on more than 35 years of experience teaching adult students and young children.

- Emphasis is on teaching methods that focus on children and their developmental needs rather than on science or art *per se*.

- The authors, who have visited and studied the Reggio schools for over two decades, include explanations of the Reggio Emilia approach and suggestions for integrating aspects of that philosophy.

- Entire chapters are included on multicultural, nonsexist education (Chapter 4) and welcoming children who have special educational requirements into the life of the school (Chapter 5).

- The importance of *advocacy*—for children, families, and for the teaching profession—is discussed.

- *Clarifying values and priorities* for the new teacher are considered.

- Diverse current issues from the *No Child Left Behind Act* to *integrated curriculum* to *multiple intelligences* to *intentional teaching* are discussed.

- The basic tenets of *Vygotsky's, Piaget's, Gardner's,* and *Bronfenbrenner's theories* are explained, as well as their *implications* for early childhood education.

- The development of reasoning and thinking skills via the *emergent approach* is emphasized.

- Practical examples are given of how teachers adapt the *Reggio Emilia* approach in American classrooms, including discussion and examples of documentation.
- *"Related Organizations and Online Resources"* in each chapter identify especially interesting and relevant resources available at low or no cost to students.

Instructor and Student Resources

A 13-video DVD series, *The Whole Child: A Caregiver's Guide to the First Five Years,* was funded by Annenberg CPB Project. This series, available in Spanish and English, was produced under the guidance of an advisory committee that included Lilian Katz, Joan Costley, Irving Siegel, Carol Phillips, Ruby Burgess, Eli and Rosaline Saltz, Barbara Ferguson-Kamara, Frederich Goodman, and Jane Squires. Materials can be purchased by calling 1-800-LEARNER or can be purchased and viewed at www.learner.org. Search for "The Whole Child."

Pearson Resources

The following resources are available online for download by adopting instructors from www.pearsonhighered.com. Click on Educators, then register and download any of the following ancillaries:

- An expanded *Instructor's Resource Manual* includes "predicaments" for class discussion and suggested assignments.
- An updated *Online Test Bank,* also available in numerous course management formats, offers multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions for every chapter.
- Complete slides for every chapter are available in PowerPoint™ format for enhanced classroom presentation.

Acknowledgments

I owe so much to so many people that it is an impossible task to mention them all. Some of these people are old, familiar friends and influences from my past. They include the students, parents, and staff who contributed to my knowledge of early childhood. In addition, I am forever in debt to my mother, Alma Berg Green, who not only began some of the first parent education classes in Los Angeles but also taught me a great deal about young children and their families.

I am also indebted to Sarah Foot and her wonderful Starr King Parent/Child Workshop, which convinced me that my future lay in early childhood education, and to my own children, who bore with me with such goodwill while I was learning the real truth about bringing up young people.

As far as the book itself is concerned, I would like to thank Murray Thomas for teaching me, among other things, how to write and John Wilson for convincing me that some things remained to be said and changed in early education. To

Chester and Peggy Harris, I am forever indebted for a certain realistic attitude toward research, particularly in the area of cognitive development.

Of course, time does not stand still, so now I want to add to my list of early childhood friends and associates. As the new edition of *The Whole Child* goes to press, the people at Pearson have been of great assistance.

Finally, it gives me considerable pleasure that Patty Weissman is the co-author for the tenth edition. While continuing the philosophy and practical approach that has characterized previous editions of *The Whole Child*, Patty Weissman contributes a fresh background in institutional and family child care. In addition, she is thoroughly acquainted with the Reggio Emilia approach because she was an early editor of *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*. I know as you enjoy the latest edition of *The Whole Child* you will come to respect Patty as much as I have and that you will agree I am leaving my precious book in good hands.

—Joanne Hendrick

I wish to thank Joanne Hendrick for her contribution to early childhood education—and to my own education—through her creation of *The Whole Child*. I first encountered the text as a student some 35 years ago, and I felt as if I had found a friend. I believed Joanne Hendrick to be someone who understood my experiences as a novice teacher, someone who appreciated my hard work and confusion as well as the deep sense of satisfaction I was beginning to feel from teaching. Through her delightful humor and down-to-earth wisdom, I came to trust the author and allowed her to pull me, reluctantly, into the world of educational theory (a world I now love). Joanne Hendrick was the first person who led me to think that the ideas of Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky are not only far from boring but are awesome and true and very useful.

My learning from Joanne Hendrick continues as we now collaborate on the revision of *The Whole Child*. I am extremely grateful for this experience. I hope that as a result of my efforts, at least one hardworking and perhaps confused novice teacher will feel as if she or he has found a friend.

I also wish to thank my other notable mentors: Rosalyn Saltz, founder of the Child Development Center at the University of Michigan–Dearborn, and Eli Saltz, former director of the Merrill-Palmer Institute. Separately and together, they are a powerhouse of good ideas, good practices, good teaching, and most important, good hearts.

I am grateful to have worked or studied with so many wonderful and inspiring educators. Whether our encounters were brief or extended, they had an impact on my professional development and my understanding of teaching. These include Sue Bredekamp, Louise Cadwell, Carol Brunson Day, Carolyn Edwards, Joan Firestone, George Forman, Brenda Fyfe, Amelia Gambetti, Lella Gandini, Karen Haigh, Pam Houk, Judith Kaminsky, Felicitas Kartiwan, Lilian Katz, Loris Malaguzzi, Rebecca New, Baji Rankin, Carlina Rinaldi, Libby Sheldon-Harsch, Eva Tarini, Sharon Tsuruta, Charlie Vincent, and Lynn White.

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Finally, I am forever grateful for all the children who have instructed me in life—from my first "batch of babies" at the Infant Development Center of San Francisco, to the Gorilla Group at Step One Nursery School in Berkeley, to my own dear offspring, Rose and Tony.

—Patricia Weissman

What Is Good Education for Young Children?

What to reply when a friend says your job is really just babysitting?

Whether early education really makes any difference?

What constitutes a good program for infants and young children?

Why people are so excited about something called Reggio Emilia?

. . . IF YOU HAVE, THE MATERIAL IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES WILL HELP YOU.

Effective preschool classrooms are places where children feel well cared for and safe. They are places where children are valued as individuals and where their need for attention, approval, and affection are supported. They are also places where children can be helped to acquire a strong foundation in the knowledge and skills needed for school success.

U.S. Department of Education (2002, p. 3)

Teaching young children can be one of the best, most deeply satisfying experiences in the world. Children from infancy to age 8 years go through fascinating, swiftly accomplished stages of development. They are possessed of vigorous personalities, rich enthusiasms, an astonishing amount of physical energy, and strong wills. There is no other time in human life when so much is learned in so brief a period (Galinsky, 2010; A. MacDonald, 2007; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000; Schiller, 2001, 2010; Shore, 1997; R. A. Thompson, 2008).

This phenomenal vigor and burgeoning growth present a challenge to the beginning teacher that is at once exhilarating and frightening. The task is a large one: The teacher must attempt to build an educational climate that enhances the children's development and whets their appetites for further learning.

The milieu must also nourish and sustain emotional health, encourage physical growth and muscular prowess, foster satisfying social interactions, enhance creativity, develop language skills, and promote the development of mental ability. Moreover, this must all be garbed in an aura of happiness and affection to establish that basic feeling of well-being that is essential to successful learning.

With such a large task at hand, it is not surprising that the beginning teacher may wonder somewhat desperately where to begin and what to do—and that is what this chapter is all about.

REALIZE YOU ARE PART OF A NOBLE PROFESSION

Early childhood education has a rich history that has led to an understanding of the importance of initial experiences. From that understanding stems the growth of high-quality programs that benefit millions of children today.

The Legacy of Friedrich Froebel

Early childhood education in the United States can trace its beginnings to the philosophy of Friedrich Froebel, who founded the first German kindergarten in 1840. Froebel's kindergartens were based on allowing children free-choice activities, creativity, social participation, and motor expression in a welcoming and stimulating environment prepared by the teacher.

In the late 19th century, American children often began working at the age of 10 after completing 3 years of school. Susan Blow, an educator in St. Louis, devoted her life to the education of young children and opened the first public kindergarten in 1873, based in Froebel's theories, in order to improve children's lives. Many of the best practices in early education today have roots in these early kindergartens. Play was viewed as a primary means for children's learning, children were seen as progressing through developmental stages, and the teacher set the environment and stimulating activities to enhance learning. When today's teachers encourage children to sing songs, build with blocks, express themselves through creative activities, and engage in "free play," they are employing the educational philosophy and methods developed by Froebel more than two centuries ago (Elkind, 2012; Froebel, 1826/1887; Frost, 2010).

Twentieth-Century Children's Advocates

Interest in the study of children and awareness of the value of educating their parents in wholesome child-rearing practices began to grow around the beginning of the 20th century. Along with the burgeoning interest in child development came a companion interest in preschool education and child care. This began abroad, where such leaders as Maria Montessori and the McMillan sisters pioneered child care as a means of improving the well-being of children of the poor.

Maria Montessori

In 1907 Maria Montessori, an ardent young reformer-physician, began her *Casa dei Bambini* (Children's House). That child care center was originally founded as part of an experiment in refurbishing slum housing in an economically distressed quarter of Rome (Loeffler, 1992). Supporters of that cooperative housing venture found that young children left unattended during the day while their parents were away at work were getting into trouble and destroying the property that people had worked so hard to restore. They therefore wanted to work out some way for the children to be cared for. Under Montessori's guidance, Children's House emphasized health, cleanliness, sensory training, individual learning, and the actual manipulation of materials (Elkind, 2012; Hainstock, 1997; Montessori, 1912). Since Montessori believed that individual self-learning comes before other learning can take place, she focused on specially designed, self-correcting materials that the child uses alone. Language experience, the use of imagination, and dramatic play were not recognized as being of much importance (Beatty, 1995).

The McMillan Sisters

In England, too, the pathetic condition of young slum children was being recognized. In 1911 two English sisters, Margaret and Rachel McMillan, founded their open-air nursery school. The McMillans had been interested in socialism and the women's movement. Through these concerns they came to know the condition of the London poor. They were horrified to discover that many children were running around shoeless in the London slums, suffering from lice, malnutrition, and scabies. Like Children's House, their school stressed good health, nourishing food, and adequate medical care. Unlike Children's House, it emphasized the value of outdoor play, sunshine, sandboxes, and regular baths. The McMillans advocated teaching children together in small groups. They stressed building independence and self-esteem. They also believed that young girls had natural gifts for working with children, so they gave them paid, on-the-job training as they worked with the children (Bradburn, 1989; McMillan, 1929).

John Dewey and Progressive Education

In the United States, childhood education witnessed a flowering of interest in the early 1900s as well. *Progressive education*, one of the most influential movements in the early childhood field still today, was developed at the University of Chicago Laboratory School under the direction of John Dewey at the beginning of the 20th century. Progressive education prevailed in elementary schools, yet many of the practices currently used in preprimary programs grew out of Dewey's then-radical philosophy of "child-centered education." Dewey believed that education should stem from the child's interests and real experiences in the world, help the child think critically, and meet all the child's needs—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual—to develop into a moral citizen and member of a democratic community (Elkind, 2012; Mooney, 2000). Dewey's influence on the field of early childhood education can be seen in the similar goals that are espoused in *developmentally appropriate practice* (DAP), which is discussed later in this chapter.

Many early childhood programs today use child-centered, play-based, hands-on teaching practices that stem from the theories of Froebel and Dewey.

Nursery Schools and the Growth of the Early Childhood Teaching Profession

"Nursery" education began to blossom in this country in the early 1920s. A group of women at the University of Chicago began the first parent cooperative nursery school in 1916. In 1919 Harriet Johnson opened the City and County School, which later metamorphosed into Bankstreet College of Education (one of today's most renowned teacher education facilities and its affiliated School for Children) in New York City. Abigail Eliot began the Ruggles Street Nursery School in Boston in 1921—the same year that Patty Smith Hill founded a laboratory nursery school at Columbia Teachers College (the oldest and largest graduate school of education in the United States today).

As interest in nursery-level education grew, the academic community began to offer training in the field, and professional associations were formed. For example, at the Merrill Palmer School of Motherhood and Home Training (which later became the prestigious Merrill Palmer Institute), a nursery school was provided where students participated in an 8-hour laboratory experience each week. They studied child care management, health, nutrition, and social problems—not very different from what students do, at least in part, today.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children

In 1925 Patty Smith Hill (1942/1992) called a meeting of early leaders in the field to discuss issues of concern in the care of young children. In 1929 the National Association of Nursery Education was founded. That association has continued and is now known as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). It has grown to more than 100,000 members and

provides an annual conference attended by 24,000 people (NAEYC, 2010). For over 25 years, NAEYC has developed an accreditation system designed to ensure high-quality standards in early childhood programs. Over 7,000 preprimary centers were NAEYC accredited in 2010. In addition to promoting the educational philosophy of developmentally appropriate practice, the organization provides professional development resources and seminars, publishes books and journals, and is a leading advocate for public policy issues that affect children and families (NAEYC, 2010). Information about NAEYC is included in the Related Organizations and Online Resources section at the end of this chapter.

The field of early childhood education has a noble history that has resulted in a proliferation of programs designed with the very best intentions for young children. People who enter the field usually do so out of a genuine sense of caring about children—certainly not for a love of money! (The issue of compensation will be discussed later in this chapter.) Most of us in early childhood education—like John Dewey or Maria Montessori or Patty Smith Hill—want to make a difference in children's lives and, by doing so, help to create a better society. Nevertheless, these questions have probably crossed every early childhood teacher's mind: Is all our hard work effective? Can we really make a difference?

TEACHER TALK

"The NAEYC national conferences are completely mind-blowing. To be surrounded by tens of thousands of early childhood professionals—attending workshops, making connections, hearing what the researchers and movers and shakers are up to—makes me feel I am part of an important community. I always come away inspired."

CAN EARLY EDUCATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

For several decades, research on early childhood education has sought to investigate the effects of various kinds of programs on the development of young children. The results of these investigations have been at times discouraging and at times heartening. In addition, since the 1990s, scientists investigating brain development have made a number of findings that support the significance of good early childhood education (Galinsky, 2010; Healy, 2011; A. MacDonald, 2007; Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2011; Schweinhart, 2008; Shore, 1997; Stephens, 2006b; R. A. Thompson, 2008; Washington, 2002).

It is important to know about the results of such studies because most members of the general public, including parents and legislators, are still uninformed about the potential value of early education and persist in seeing it as "just babysitting." If we are tired of this misguided point of view, we need to have the results of these studies on the tips of our tongues so that we can explain the value of our work with young children to those who need to be better informed about it.

Brain Development Research

For centuries, the study of the human brain was limited to the realm of theory since researchers were unable to investigate a normal living brain without surgery. The development of noninvasive brain-scanning technologies in the 1990s, as well as new means for studying brain waves and chemistry, now allows neuroscientists to see how the brain functions without causing distress

to the person being examined. Recent studies have looked at the brains of young children, infants, and even fetuses. A wealth of neuroscientific data has accumulated that shows how the child's brain develops.

The new brain research provides early childhood educators with a deeper understanding about teaching and learning. Several findings are relevant for those who work with infants and young children:

- The brain development of infants and toddlers proceeds at a staggering pace, and the human brain is most active during the first 3 years of life.
- Early experiences have an impact on the actual structure of the brain.
- Early experiences have a decisive impact on how a person functions as an adult.
- There are prime times, particularly in the early years, for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills.
- Positive experiences in the first years of life enhance brain development, whereas negative experiences, such as abuse or maternal depression, can interfere with development.
- Warm, responsive care during infancy is critical to healthy development (Galinsky, 2010; Healy, 2011; A. MacDonald, 2007; Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2011; Schiller, 2010; Shore, 1997; Stephens, 2006b). Figure 1.1 describes the ways in which teachers can put these findings into practice.

Effects of Early Childhood Education

The research on children in the Perry Preschool Project is probably the most important long-term study of the effects of early education on children's development. Begun in 1962, that research is still continuing, and the data

The human brain is most active during the first 3 years of life.

An overview of recent research on brain development suggests teachers can support optimal growth by doing the following:

- Develop a warm, caring relationship with each and every child. Let the children know you appreciate who they are as individuals, their unique attributes, cares, concerns, thoughts, and feelings. Let each child know how special he or she is to you.
- Ensure that each child is safe and healthy and has good nutrition and ample opportunity for physical exercise.
- Be aware of the early intervention steps to take when necessary. Refer children who are at risk to specialists as early as possible. Understand your professional responsibility when intervention is called for.
- Never try to speed up development; rather, try to enhance it with developmentally appropriate and stimulating activities that call upon the child to interact and communicate with others.
- Respect each child's pace and style of development.
- Communicate with families about their child's development. Share your knowledge of brain research, for example, the negative effect on development when too much time is spent in front of the television or computer screen.
- Establish predictable routines. Be consistent, and let the children know they can count on you.
- Encourage children's exploration, play, and creative expression.
- Surround children with language. Let them know how much you value words and conversation, books, songs, and storytelling. Get in the habit of asking open-ended questions that require more than a simple yes or no answer.
- Allow children to explore with all their senses, not only seeing and hearing. Children need to touch and manipulate objects, smell, taste, discriminate different sounds, and so forth.
- Encourage children's self-initiated play and exploration. Support children's natural curiosity about themselves, other people, and the world at large. By sharing in their wonder and excitement, you help them develop a love for school.

have been consistent over more than five decades of investigation. Researchers found substantial differences between the experimental group, which had experienced the benefits of a good preschool program (the Perry Preschool), and a similar group, which had not had those experiences as they reached adulthood. All the children in the study lived in low-income families and were considered at risk for developing ability deficits that produce a range of problems in school and throughout life. Fewer of the Perry Preschool children had been in trouble with the law, more of them had graduated from high school, and more of them had jobs after graduation (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2006; Heckman, 2011; Schweinhart, Montie, Yiang, Barnett, & Belfield, 2005; Weikart, 1990). The most recent data indicate that this trend toward self-sufficiency was continuing as the group reached age 40. They continued to have fewer arrests and significantly higher incomes, and many more of them owned homes than did those

in the control group. When these results are translated into taxpayer dollars saved, the money amounts to over $195,000.00 per participant (Schwein-hart et al., 2005). For every dollar originally invested in the preschool pro-gram, the rate of return is 7% to 10%. Heckman (2011) points out that this rate of return is higher than the return on the stock market and concludes, "The high return demonstrates that society can substantially benefit from early childhood interventions" (p. 6).

The Perry Preschool studies are presented because they are the most widely publicized pieces of research on this subject, but you should realize that they are among many studies that now support the value of well-planned early edu-cation in children's development and success in later life (Barnett, Jung, Wong, Cook, & Lamy, 2007; Heckman, 2011; Isaacs, 2008; National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007). In a review of the most prominent research studies on early childhood intervention programs, Campbell and Taylor (2009) state, "Enduring cognitive or educational gains attributable to early educational programs have now been demonstrated convincingly" (p. 206).

Research Implications for Teaching

The Perry Preschool studies and the research on brain development lead us to an important conclusion: Good early education has long-lasting positive effects on children and on society. Teachers of young children wield a considerable power. With that power comes the responsibility to provide the best possible care and education for the infants and young children under our watch. The first step for the beginning teacher is to understand the theoretical foundations that underlie early childhood education. As teachers, we make theoretical choices throughout the day—whether we are aware of them or not. They include everything from how we structure the day, to the types of questions we ask, to the experiences and materials we provide. The more informed we are in our choices, the more positive our impact on the children will be.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

All teachers (and parents) have their own ideas about what is right for chil-dren. Everyone has beliefs about how children should behave, what course their development should follow, and what the appropriate experiences are for their age. Many times this understanding of childhood comes from one's own upbringing and is not reflected upon in a conscious way. As a begin-ning teacher, you would be wise to think about your own childhood and the expectations you have for children before entering the classroom. Theo-ries of development and teaching methods that have been tried and tested for decades—sometimes centuries—should inform teaching practices. By studying theories and the "best practices" that have grown out of theory, teachers can provide the type of early education that is most beneficial to children.
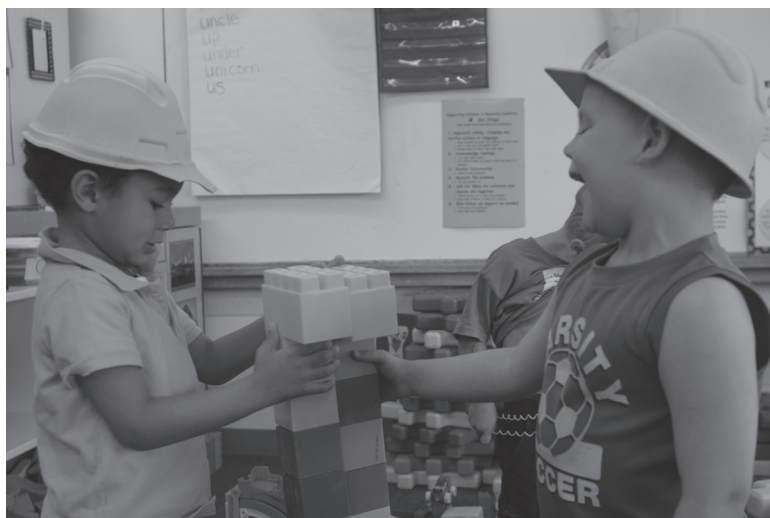
Developmental Approaches

Many theories regarding early childhood education are based on the premise that child development is a continually unfolding process. Children pass through stages, and their interests and learning are directly related to this growth or developmental process. The developmental approach is used in the majority of early childhood programs in the United States today.

This text takes a developmental approach and views the child as being "whole" but composed of a number of developing selves: the physical self, the emotional self, the social self, the cognitive self, and the creative self. It is important for teachers to understand how each aspect or *domain* of development occurs and how each area influences and is influenced by the others.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

There has been considerable research examining the typical development of children and describing the normal course of children's growth in charts of developmental norms (see Appendix A). This knowledge base has led to a movement within the field of early childhood education known as developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). *Developmentally appropriate* means the learning activities planned for children are placed at the correct level for their stage of development and are suited to individual children's tastes, abilities, and cultures. By following the DAP guidelines developed by NAEYC, teachers use developmental charts not to try to speed up development, but to better understand and plan for each child (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC, 2009a, 2012). This is especially important for children with special needs, who benefit from a supportive environment that enables them to capitalize on their strengths, rather than one that focuses on their delays in comparison to the norm (Larkin, 2001).

In DAP, learning activities are suited to the individual children's abilities, tastes, and cultures.

- **Know about child development and learning.** Knowing what is typical at each age and stage of early development is crucial in helping you to decide which experiences are best for children's growth. This knowledge—based on research—informs all aspects of curriculum planning and teaching practices.
- **Know what is individually appropriate.** Developmentally appropriate teachers continually observe each child's interactions with others and the environment. It is important to know about each child's interests, abilities, and developmental progress.
- **Know what is culturally important.** Children's families shape their lives. Developmentally appropriate teachers respect the children's families and make an effort to get to know them, their values, their cultural background, their ways of interacting with their child and others, and their expectations for the child and the school. By embracing the child's family and culture, teachers can provide meaningful and relevant experiences for the child.

DAP is based upon three core considerations (Figure 1.2). These considerations are

- Know about child development and learning.
- Know what is individually appropriate.
- Know what is culturally important.

It is suggested that teachers try to keep these considerations in mind throughout the day when viewing the children and making both long- and short-term curriculum decisions.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory looks at the early family experiences that influence and shape the child's development.

Contributions of Sigmund Freud

One of the most influential theories in the field of child development is Freud's theory of personality development. In the late 1800s Sigmund Freud began investigating the human mind. Although trained as a physician, Freud became interested in how early childhood experiences lead to mental problems in adulthood. He developed a treatment for patients that consisted of having them talk at length about their past experiences, a technique known as *psychoanalysis*. In Freudian theory, child-rearing practices used during early childhood are viewed as a crucial, defining aspect of development (Freud, 1922/1959).

Freud also proposed a series of developmental stages that all humans pass through. Each *psychosexual* stage relates to the chief source of bodily pleasure. For example, the infant seeks oral gratification, whereas toddlers' sexual energy is focused around the anus and the process of elimination (keep in mind this is the time that toilet training usually takes place). Early childhood

educators also work with children who are in the *phallic* stage or *early genital* stage (3 to 6 years), when there is often intense interest in their (and others') genitals (Freud, 1922/1959).

Although Freudian theory has been criticized as being outdated or sexist, his contribution to our understanding of childhood impulses and behavior is enormous. A knowledge of Freudian theory can help teachers understand the developmental appropriateness of a 2-year-old's grabbing toys (an example of what Freud termed the "id" or the child's basic drive for self-gratification) or a 4-year-old's fascination with his or her genitals. In addition, many other theories relevant to early childhood grew from a base of Freudian theory.

Contributions of Erik Erikson

One important theory in early childhood was developed by a Freudian-trained psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson. Many early childhood programs today are based in part on Erikson's *theory of psychosocial development*. Like Freud, Erikson believed children pass through stages of development; however, he saw these stages as more socially motivated than sexually motivated. Erikson's *eight stages of psychosocial development* trace personality development through the life span.

Of particular interest to early educators are Erikson's first four stages. In the stage of *trust versus mistrust* (from birth to approximately 12–18 months), the baby learns whether the world can be trusted. During this stage it is essential that a deep, intimate bond or *attachment* is formed between the infant and the caregiver for healthy development to proceed. During the stage of *autonomy versus shame and doubt* (12–18 months to approximately 3 years), the child develops a sense of self. If independence is repressed, the child begins to have self-doubts and feel ashamed. Much of the behavior attributed to the so-called terrible twos can be explained by Erikson's theory. The 2-year-old who refuses to put on a jacket or who answers almost every question with an emphatic "No!" is expressing a healthy need for autonomy. In the stage of *initiative versus guilt* (3 to 6 years), a sense of purpose develops as children use their initiative to try out new things and experience success with their ideas. If the child is met with disapproval and failure, a lasting sense of guilt can develop. The fourth stage, *latency,* generally takes place in elementary and middle school (6 to 12 years). During this period, children develop a sense of either industry or inferiority. They learn through their own persevering efforts that pleasure can be derived from a job well done. It is important for the child to discover pleasure in being productive and to develop feelings of success. The child's relationships with peers become increasingly important (Erikson, 1963).

> **TEACHER TALK**
>
> "Erik Erikson's theory of development really speaks to me as an infant/toddler caregiver. Because I know how important attachment is, I make sure to form close, affectionate bonds with each child in my care."

Family-Ecological Theory

The family-ecological approach looks at the entire environment that surrounds and shapes the child's development.

Contributions of Urie Bronfenbrenner

The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner looks not at child development itself but at the environments in which children develop. He called his theory ecological because ecology is the science of the relationships between beings and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner proposed four levels of environment that affect the child's development. The first level, or *microsystem,* refers to the setting for the child's behavior, such as the activities, the participants, and their roles in the child's life. The child's family structure, neighborhood, playmates, and child care arrangements are examples of the child's microsystem. The second level, or *mesosystem,* refers to the links among the various settings in which the child spends time. For example, a school-age child's mesosystem in the United States might include the links among home, school, church, neighborhood, and extracurricular activities, such as sports or after-school programs. The third level is the *exosystem,* which includes settings that the child does not actually enter but that affect the child indirectly. For example, the child is affected by the parents' workplace although he or she may never go there. Other examples of the child's exosystem are the local community structure and services, the school board, and all forms of the mass media, such as television and the Internet. The fourth level of the child's ecological system is the *macrosystem,* which refers to the culture and overall society in which the child lives. Social values, beliefs, customs, and institutions all have an important impact on the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Figure 1.3 illustrates how the four levels of environment influence the child's development.

Active Learning, Constructivist Theories

Many early childhood programs today are based on a *hands-on, active-learning,* or *child-centered* philosophy. It is important to understand where these ideas came from and what they mean.

Contributions of Jean Piaget

You will find that the work of the great theorist and investigator Jean Piaget is referred to again and again throughout this volume. His more than half century of research into the developmental stages and characteristics of children's cognitive processes is invaluable, as are both his emphasis on the importance of dynamic interaction between children and the environment as children *construct* what they know for themselves and his emphasis on the significance of play as a medium for learning (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1990; Elkind, 2012; Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008).

However, many scholars and teachers are not satisfied with restricting themselves solely to Piagetian *constructivist theory* because they believe that Piaget did not say enough about social relationships, creativity, or emotional health. The reason is that Piaget's primary interest was the investigation of children's thought processes.
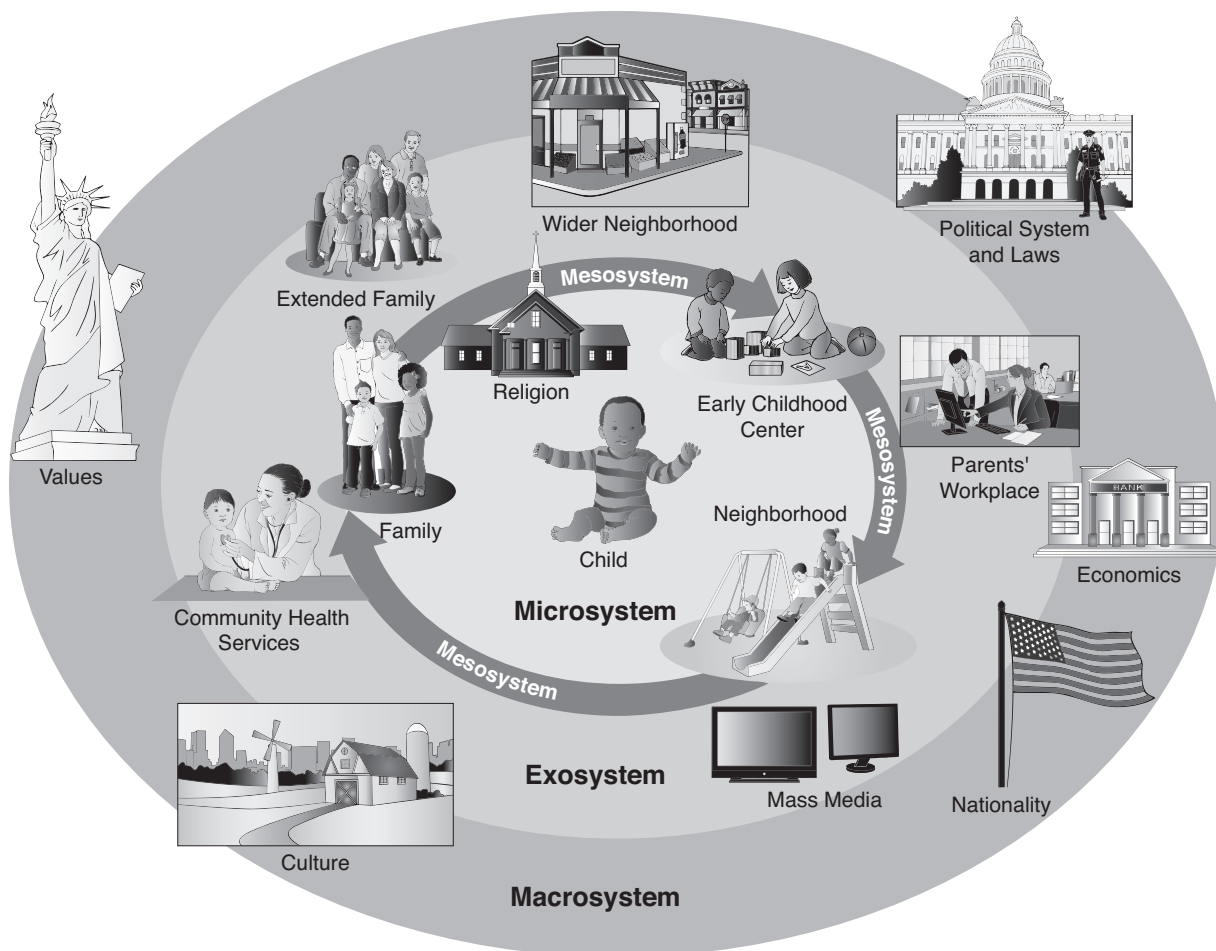
Figure 1.3
Bronfenbrenner's four environmental systems that affect the child's development

A point of view closely related to Piagetian constructivism but more comprehensive is the *developmental-interactionist* approach of the Bank Street and High/Scope programs (Bank Street, 1998; Epstein, 2003). This approach sees children as developing human beings in whom knowing about things (the intellectual self) combines with feeling about them (the emotional self). In this point of view the impetus for growth lies in part within the maturing individual, but it also occurs in part as a result of the interaction between the child and the environment and people to whom the child relates.

This interaction is important because children are regarded as being active participants in their own growth. Children learn by constructing and reconstructing what they know as they encounter a variety of experiences and people who widen and enrich their knowledge. The teacher's role is one of guiding, questioning, and enabling—not just stuffing children with an assortment of facts and rewards for good behavior.

The teacher's role is one of guiding, questioning, and enabling—not just stuffing the child with an assortment of facts and rewards for good behavior.

Contributions of Lev Vygotsky

In recent years Lev Vygotsky (1978) has become known as yet another educational theorist who has contributed helpful insights about the way young children learn and develop. Vygotsky reminds us how important the influence of culture and social interchange is to mental growth. Adults and more knowledgeable peers who transmit these social values and information assist the child's growth. They do this by interacting with and encouraging children to operate at the growing edge of their mental abilities—the area of "assisted performance" termed by Vygotsky as *the zone of proximal development* (often abbreviated as the ZPD).

Vygotsky identified social play as the premier or "leading" activity that enables young children to operate in that zone, since play requires the use of imagination, symbolic language, and observation of social rules necessitating self-regulation. In addition to play, Vygotsky devoted considerable time to defining the role of the teacher. He advocated that teachers should sense which skills are about to emerge in each child and seek to develop them. Development should be accomplished by delicately assisting children—first by finding out what they already know and then by using dialogue and various experiences to assist them to advance to a further point in their growth. This technique of "scaffolding" a child's learning—that is, supporting and assisting the child before new learning and skills emerge—has been shown to be very effective for both children with special needs and children with typical development (Barnes & Whinnery, 2002; Larkin, 2001).

The Reggio Emilia Approach

The teachers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, are confident about the preschool child's abilities (Gandini, 2008; Malaguzzi, 1998; Rinaldi, 1993). They see the child as

strong, competent, capable of constructing thoughts, and having great potential to offer to the world. In this approach, the teacher becomes a compass that may point the child in a particular direction, and education is seen as an ever-developing process that cannot be predetermined because it emerges bit by bit.

The 32 children's centers in the town of Reggio Emilia are places where children and teachers interact—listening and talking with each other—to explore subjects thoroughly by exchanging ideas and trying out those ideas. Teachers select an aspect of the children's interests to develop further, an aspect that presents problems for them to consider and solve (or, as Reggian teachers put it, "provokes" the children into thought). A particular interest may be pursued in depth over several months, depending on how intrigued the children become with the topic.

The children transform the results of these joint investigations into visible products that communicate to other people what they have found. Since the children are too young to write, the staff encourages them to express what they know by using all sorts of other languages, or what educators in Reggio have termed "the hundred languages of children." It might be the language of paint, or clay, or cardboard structures, or concoctions of bent wire bedecked with tissue paper, or shadow plays.

American early childhood education already espouses many ideas basic to the Reggian philosophy. In fact, there are many similarities between the Reggio approach and progressive education as developed by Dewey: parent involvement; fostering creativity; learning by doing; and inquiry-based, child-centered, hands-on, cooperative learning (D. L. Black, 2000; Elkind, 2012; Mooney, 2000). But we are also tantalized by evidence of the exceptional abilities demonstrated by these young Italian children, particularly because observers report that it is the children themselves who are doing the work and accomplishing it without strain—and in a delightful, joyful setting. It is hoped that inclusion of information about the Reggio approach in *The Whole Child* will encourage the exploration of many of its principles in our own work with children in this country. There will be further discussion of the Reggio approach, as well as the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, in Chapters 14 and 16.

Behaviorist or Learning Theory

Although developmental theories form the theoretical basis of this text, there is one other theory that warrants our attention. The term *behavior modification* tends to bring scowls to the faces of many teachers, who object to the potential for manipulation inherent in that approach. However, it is important to understand its positive value as well. Learning theorists who practice behavior modification have accumulated a great deal of carefully documented research that substantiates their claims that this approach, which rewards desirable behavior and discourages undesirable actions, can be a powerful avenue for teaching (Carpenter & Nangle, 2001; R. M. Thomas, 1999; Van Duijvenvoorde et al., 2008). It has proved its usefulness particularly in work with children with a variety of disabilities (McLean, Wolery, & Bailey, 2004).

Behavior modification theorists maintain that children learn as a result of rewards (for example, teacher attention or praise) or punishments (such as scolding or the way some teachers use, or misuse, the dreaded "time-out chair"—similar to putting a dunce cap on the child's head!). It is true that a program based solely on the deliberate manipulation of children's behavior is repugnant, but it is also true that *all teachers use this technique constantly and extensively whether they realize it or not*. Every smile, every frown, every positive or negative bit of attention a child receives either encourages or discourages future behavior. Therefore, rather than blindly condemning such theory, why not become aware of how often we informally employ such strategies and acknowledge their power?

From Theory to Practice

Thus far we have seen that the history of early childhood education is rich and quite wondrous in all that it has accomplished since the first U.S. public kindergarten opened in 1873. We have also noted that early education has a strong, positive impact not only on children's development but on society as well. Finally, we've discussed the different theories that we can apply in our teaching so that we provide the best education and care for young children. The rest of this chapter will equip you with practical information about the types of programs in which you can expect to find work and how to go about integrating theoretical ideas into practice as you begin your teaching career.

Types of Early Childhood Education

Over 11 million preschool-age children are in child care arrangements today (NACCRRA, 2011). It is now more common for a child under the age of 5 to be in child care than to be at home with a parent (CDF, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Certainly the current demand for early care is due to the number of mothers with young children who are in the paid labor force. Today the majority of children under the age of 5 have mothers who work outside the home (NACCRRA, 2011). In the year 2005, over 75% of mothers with school-age children worked in the paid labor force, creating a need for before- and after-school programs in elementary schools (Cohany & Sok, 2007) in addition to preschool programs.

It is unlikely that the demand for children's early education programs will lessen in the near future. Mothers will continue to find employment outside the home for a number of reasons, including economic necessity and self-fulfillment. Additionally, given the various benefits of high-quality early education, many families choose to send their children to preprimary school in order to give them an optimal experience, regardless of the mother's employment. Those entering the field of early childhood education will find a wide range of student-teaching possibilities and work available to them in just about every community throughout the country.

All Programs Include Children with Special Needs

Early childhood teachers should be prepared to work with a wide range of children, including those with disabilities or other special educational requirements. Every effort should be taken to integrate these children fully into the program.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts B and C

IDEA is our nation's special education law, the federal education program that assists states in implementing services for individuals with disabilities, birth through 21 years of age. Part B provides services to children ages 3 to 21 years. Part C provides services to infants and toddlers. IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities have available to them a "free appropriate public education." IDEA mandates that public programs, such as Head Start and the public schools, include children with special needs. During the 2008–2009 school year, close to 700,000 children with disabilities, ages 3 to 5 years, received services under IDEA Part B (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). Novice teachers should become familiar with IDEA and the many ways in which children with a variety of special needs are included in preprimary and primary programs (see Chapter 5 for more in-depth discussion of *inclusion*).

Center-Based Care

The most prevalent form of preprimary care and education is provided in a nonresidential child care center, usually serving 13 or more children. The majority of preschoolers with a mother in the labor force are in child care centers (NACCRRA, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Center-based programs are licensed by the state, and regulations vary widely from state to state. Quality in centers varies enormously as well, as there is no national "quality control." Centers that have gone through a voluntary process of NAEYC accreditation, however, tend to have higher-quality programs (Bredekamp, 2011; Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). Unfortunately, only 6% of licensed child care centers are accredited by NAEYC (NACCRRA, 2012).

Teaching situations range from half- to full-day care of infants up through prekindergarten children. The center may be funded by parents, the state, a parent's employer, a church, a private charity, and/or the federal government. It may be part of a chain or may operate as an independent center. It might be located in a new facility or in make-do circumstances, on a college campus, or in a church, a public school, or its own building. It may be a public preschool program for 4-year-olds or a Head Start Center, part of the military child care system operated by the U.S. Department of Defense, or restricted to serving families of low income. It may be staffed by teachers with a child development associate (CDA) or college degree in early childhood education (AA, AAS, and BA degrees), by people working on those degrees, by those possessing a master's or even a PhD, or by people who meet only the criteria of being 16 years old and having a high school degree and no criminal record. The variations for children and teachers are truly mind-boggling. Today,

universal pre-K or preprimary programs that are sponsored by states are the main source for preschool education. Each state has its own system of delivery as well as its own standards and forms of assessment, all of which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Compensatory Programs

Head Start is the best known of the compensatory programs since it exists nationwide. Some states also fund additional preschool programs designed to educate children from families with low incomes. Although termed *compensatory* because they were originally intended to compensate for deficiencies in the child's home environment, current investigations have found greater strengths in the homes than had previously been noted. Now the programs seek to honor these strengths, as well as to compensate for lags in verbal and mental development that are associated with poverty.

Head Start was created in 1965 by the federal government to provide comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to children and their families who are living in poverty. Nearly 30 million preschool-age children have benefited from Head Start (Vinci, 2012). In 2009 there were over 900,000 children enrolled in Head Start programs, the majority of them (87%) 3- and 4-year-olds (Head Start Bureau, 2010). With the reauthorization of the Head Start program in 1994, Congress established a new program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women, which is called Early Head Start. In 2009, 10% of the children enrolled in Head Start were under the age of 3 (Head Start Bureau, 2010).

Montessori Schools

There are over 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States; the majority are privately funded preschools for children ages 3 to 6. Although there is no copyright on the Montessori name (therefore, any program can deem itself "Montessori"), there are two main organizations in the United States that provide training in the Montessori method: the American Montessori Society (the larger of the two) and Association Montessori Internationale, which has been affiliated with Maria Montessori and her family. Most Montessori preschools offer multiage classrooms where children freely choose to work with specially prepared materials in a well-organized environment designed to stimulate individual learning. Placement of student teachers in schools that base their curriculum on the teachings of Maria Montessori is usually difficult to arrange unless the students are participating in an academic program philosophically based in the same tradition.

Demonstration or Laboratory Schools

Demonstration or laboratory schools are typically connected with teacher training institutions or with research programs. They can be wonderful places for students to begin their teaching because they are the most likely of all the kinds of schools to be child and student centered. Ideally, students should have teaching opportunities in both laboratory and real-life schools so that they receive a balance of ideal and realistic teaching experiences.

Family Child Care

Family child care, where care is provided for a small group of children in the provider's own home, is another facet of the early childhood profession. Frequently used for infants and toddlers, family child care has the virtues of providing children with a smaller, more intimate environment, more flexible hours, and a more homelike atmosphere. Providers often prefer this setting because it offers opportunities for increased income while keeping their own children as part of the group, and it offers personal independence in curriculum planning and scheduling. Some family child care homes are licensed by a state agency, although most are unlicensed (NACCRRA, 2012). Licensing regulations vary from state to state, with the total number of children allowed ranging from 6 to 12. As is true for center-based care, fees, and hence a provider's income, vary widely, as does the quality of care.

Public School Programs

The public school system is the primary vehicle for the education of young children in the United States. In recent years public schools have started to provide services for more children by opening preschool classrooms as well as before- and after-school programs.

Elementary Grades K–3

Early childhood teachers in public elementary schools should be aware of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This federal legislation requires states to ensure that qualified teachers are in every public school classroom and that schools use research-based learning standards. Schools are required to assess children's performance in reading, language arts, science, and math annually in Grades 3 to 8, and schools, school districts, and states are held accountable for children's performance results (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). The NCLB Act has greatly affected the curricula used in elementary schools, and those who teach in public primary schools should be knowledgeable about their state's standards and assessments. Chapter 6 contains more detailed discussion of the NCLB Act.

A Final Thought About Programs

Wherever you end up in your student placement or teaching career, you will bring with you your own set of values, approaches, and teaching methods—what you might think of as your "tool kit." It is wise to start assembling this tool kit early on, learning from others what has worked for them and discovering what works for you. When you observe exceptionally good teachers, take note of what they do, what makes them effective, and which approaches they use. What's in that experienced teacher's tool kit that you might borrow?

   The following explains the approaches that form the basis of *The Whole Child,* culled from many years of research and work with young children, as well as from observing some exceptionally good teachers. For more information about getting started in your teaching placement, see Appendix B.

BASIC PREMISES OF THIS TEXT

Besides advocating that a curriculum be provided for every self, this text is based on additional basic premises. The first premise is that the purpose of education is to increase competence and mastery in all aspects of the developing self. It is much more important to teach children to cope by equipping them with skills than to stuff them full of facts. This is so because confidence in their coping ability is what underlies children's sense of self-worth. Skills empower children.

The second premise is that physical and emotional health are absolutely fundamental to the well-being of children. Any program that ignores that fact is building its curriculum on a foundation of sand.

The third premise is that children learn most easily by means of actual, involving experiences with people and activities. These are best accomplished in an open, carefully planned yet flexible environment where children must take responsibility and make decisions for themselves and where they have ample opportunity to learn through play.

The fourth premise is that children pass through various stages as they develop. Piaget has, of course, thoroughly demonstrated this premise in regard to intellectual development, but it has been heavily documented for the other selves as well (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Gesell, Halverson, Thompson, & Ilg, 1940; A. MacDonald, 2007; Shore, 1997).

The fifth premise is that children do not exist in isolation as they develop. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Vygotsky (1978) remind us, we are all surrounded by ever-widening influences of family, community, and the world beyond—all of which affect the direction and degree of our growth.

The final premise is that children need time to be children. The purpose of early education should not be to pressure and urge youngsters on to the next

Children need time to be children.

step in a hurried way. Recent research provides evidence that placing academic pressure on young children is a precursor to negative attitudes toward school and decreased academic accomplishments in later grades (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997; Wien, 2004).

Children need time and personal space in which to grow. They need time to be themselves—to do nothing, to stand and watch, to repeat again what they did before; in short, they need time to live *in* their childhood, rather than *through* it. If we are sensitive to their concerns and offer the young children we teach rich and appropriate learning opportunities combined with enough time for them to enjoy and experience those opportunities to the fullest, we will be enhancing the era of childhood, not violating it.

PUTTING PREMISES INTO PRACTICE: PLANNING A GOOD DAY FOR CHILDREN

No matter what setting you work in as a teacher, the following ingredients are all essential for creating quality education for young children.

Good Human Relationships Are a Fundamental Ingredient of a Good Day

For warmth and personal contact to flourish, the day must be planned and paced so that opportunities for person-to-person, one-to-one encounters are numerous. In practical terms, this means groups must be kept small and the ratio of adults to children must be as high as possible, especially with regard to infants. To provide optimal care, the recommended maximum group size for infants is six, with each adult caring for no more than three babies (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Lally et al., 2003).

Many occasions must also be provided for the children to move freely about, making personal choices and generating individual contacts. Such arrangements permit numerous interludes in which informal learning experiences can be enjoyed and human caring can be expressed. The moments may be as fleeting as a quick hug when the teacher ties a pair of trailing shoelaces or as extended as a serious discussion of where babies come from. It is the *quality* of individualized, personal caring and the chance to talk together that are significant.

Families Must Be Included as Part of the Life of the School

Mounting research confirms that inclusion of families in the educational process, whether in home-tutoring programs or the school itself, results in longer-lasting educational gains for the child (Mendoza, Katz, Robertson, & Rothenberg, 2003; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). Family inclusion is also a fundamental cornerstone of the Reggio approach, in which parents participate in day-to-day interactions, discussions of relevant issues, excursions, and celebrations (Gandini, 2008; Spaggiari, 1998).

High-Quality Education Must Be Developmentally Appropriate

If the material is at the right developmental level, the children will be drawn to it and want to learn about it (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2011; Wien, 2004). In contrast, when children are pushed too far ahead of their current levels and the curriculum is unsuited to their abilities, it's like pushing them into deep water before they can swim: They're likely to dread the water and avoid it when they can. At this early stage of schooling, it is crucial for children to decide that learning is something to be pursued with verve, not that it is difficult and anxiety provoking. For this reason it is vital that teachers have a good grasp of the developmental characteristics of children at various ages, understand how they are likely to progress as they grow, and plan the curriculum to stimulate that growth without making it so difficult that children give up in despair.

High-Quality Education Is Individualized

Teachers must see every youngster not only in terms of what they know in general about child development, but also in terms of what each particular child is like developmentally and culturally. This is the real art of teaching. Fortunately, in preprimary programs, the small group size and intimacy make it possible for teachers to know each child well and to plan with particular individuals in mind, particularly those with special needs. Excellent elementary teachers also find ways to connect with and respond to each student in the classroom.

High-Quality Education Honors Diversity in Its Many Forms

Ever since its original publication in 1973, *The Whole Child* has included an entire chapter advocating cross-cultural education and another on inclusion of children who have special needs into the group. Everyone's experience is enriched when children from a variety of backgrounds are included in the school.

High-Quality Education Uses Reasonable and Authentic Methods of Assessment to Find Out More About the Children

Assessing young children is a risky and problematic business (Epstein, Schweinhart, DeBruin-Parecki, & Robin, 2006; Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000), particularly in this time of mandatory testing of Head Start and elementary school children. At best, assessments can identify skills, needs, and promising potentials of such young children; at worst, they can use totally inappropriate methods of evaluation (McAfee, Leong, & Bodrova, 2004).

Perhaps the most desirable way to think of assessment for the majority of young children is as an opportunity to record growth and deepen teachers' and parents' insights about particular children. There are a variety of ways that teachers can generate such records. These include information contributed

by families, simple checklists based on developmental charts, snapshots or even videotapes of children's special accomplishments such as block structures or other creations, an occasional painting, and weekly anecdotal records citing events or interactions related to the child that the teacher thinks are significant (McAfee et al., 2004). Many infant caregivers find it useful to keep notes throughout the day. In addition to recording information about feeding, diapering, and such, it is a good way to note new developments, such as a new tooth or an attempt at crawling, to communicate to parents. Records are most helpful when they are begun early in the year so that progress can be noted as it occurs.

It is important to keep in mind that many early childhood teachers today must adhere to state and federally mandated standards and assessments. This is true for Head Start teachers, many who work in state-sponsored preschool programs, and public elementary school teachers. Teachers must be aware of which educational standards and assessments are required in their school.

When more comprehensive assessments are needed, it is best to refer the family to someone who specializes in that area. See Chapter 5 for a discussion about how to make effective referrals.

High-Quality Education Has a Balance Between Self-Selection and Teacher Direction; Both Approaches Are Valuable

The idea that young children can be trusted to choose beneficial educational experiences for themselves goes back in educational theory about 100 years to Dewey—and even earlier than that! Although the following statement sounds as if a modern-day developmentally appropriate teacher is speaking, it was made in the 1700s by Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "We should not teach children the sciences; but give them a taste for them" (Rousseau, n.d.).

Currently this concept is being used in Reggio Emilia, as well as continuing its tenure in the majority of American child care centers. Allowing children to pursue their own interests in depth, rather than restricting them to the 20 minutes allotted for "creative expression," demonstrates respect for children's abilities and natural intelligence. When children are respected in this way, their self-expression *and* self-esteem flourish.

Self-selection needs to be balanced with opportunities for group experiences, too. Some of those experiences are small, casual, and informal, as when a group of interested children gather around the teacher to discuss where the snow went and how to make it return. Some, such as large-group times and mealtimes, require more management by the teacher. These more formal situations are essential ingredients in the early childhood program because they provide opportunities to make certain that all the children are included in thinking and reasoning activities every day.

The joy of creative expression!

High-Quality Education Should Be Comprehensive

One aspect of planning that deserves special consideration is that the curriculum should be comprehensive in coverage. As mentioned earlier, a valuable way to think about this point is to picture the child as being composed of a number of selves: the physical self, the emotional self, the social self, the cognitive self, and the creative self. This text is based on this division of the child into selves, since experience has shown that various aspects of the curriculum fall rather neatly under these headings and that the five selves succeed in covering the personality of the child.

The physical self includes not only large- and fine-muscle development but also the handling of routines because such things as eating, resting, and toileting contribute much to physical comfort and well-being. For the emotional self we consider ways to increase and sustain mental health, to use discipline to foster self-control, to cope with aggression, and to foster self-esteem. Included for the social self are learning to build social concern and kindliness, learning to enjoy work, and learning to value the cultures and abilities of other people. The cognitive, or intellectual, self is considered in terms of the development of language and generalized and specific reasoning abilities. Finally, the creative self covers the areas of self-expression through the use of art materials and creativity as expressed in play and applied in thought.

High-Quality Teaching Is Intentional

High-quality education doesn't happen by chance; it takes careful thought, planning, and follow-through by a well-informed teacher. The intentional teacher has clearly defined goals for the children, continually observing and assessing each child as well as the classroom as a whole.

The first aspect to consider is the emotional atmosphere. Early childhood programs should be warm, inviting, and built upon a foundation of respect for all participants. From this emotionally supportive base, intentional teachers "deliberately select equipment and materials and put them in places where children will want to use them . . . choose which specific learning activities, contexts, and settings to use and when . . . how much time to spend on specific content areas and how to integrate them. All these teacher decisions and behaviors set the tone and substance of what happens in the classroom" (Epstein, 2012, p. 1). Intentional teaching is discussed in more detail in Chapter 16.

High-Quality Education Has Stability and Regularity Combined with Flexibility

Young children need to know what is likely to happen next during the day. This means that the order of events should be generally predictable. Predictability enables children to prepare mentally for the next event; it makes compliance with routines more likely and helps them feel secure.

However, time schedules and routines should not be allowed to dominate the school. Sometimes overconformance to time schedules happens because teachers are creatures of habit and simply do not realize that juice and raisins do not have to be served at exactly 9:15. Rather than sticking to clock time, it is better to maintain an orderly but elastic schedule wherein play periods and investigative activities can be extended when the majority of the children are involved in activities that interest them intensely.

High-Quality Education Has Variety

Variety is not just the spice of life; it's an essential ingredient in the early childhood program. Children's attitudes toward school are being shaped through the experiences we offer them; therefore, we must be sure to keep the day stimulating and engaging.

Children Need Many Different Kinds of Experiences, as Well as Changes in Basic Experiences

Variety should certainly be incorporated into a program for young children. Many teachers think of variety of experience in terms of field trips or covering different topics such as families or baby animals. But another kind of variety that should also be considered is variety in everyday basic learning experiences. What a difference there is between the school that has the same pet rat and bowl of goldfish all year and the school that first raises a rabbit, then borrows a brood hen, and next has two snakes as visitors. Lack of variety is also apparent in schools that offer the omnipresent easel as their major "art" experience or others that set out all the blocks at the beginning of the year and leave it at that.

Children Need Changes of Pace During the Day to Avoid Monotony and Fatigue and to Maintain a Balance of Kinds of Experiences

The most obvious way to incorporate variation of pace is to plan for it in the overall schedule. For example, a quiet snack can be followed by a dance period.

Additional opportunities to meet individual temperamental requirements of children must be allowed for. Quieter, less gregarious children need to have places available where they can retreat from the herd, and more active youngsters need the escape hatch of moving about when they have sat beyond their limit of endurance.

Some kinds of programs appear to have special problems associated with pacing. For example, some compensatory programs attempt to cram so much into such a short time (playtime, story time, snack, lunch, special activity time, not to mention visits from the psychologist, field trips, and special visitors) that the day goes by in a headlong rush of children being hurried from one thing to the next without the opportunity to savor any experience richly and fully. At the other extreme, some child care programs offer a variety of activities and changes of pace during the morning but turn the children loose in the play yard for 3 interminable hours in the afternoon.

Learning Must Be Based on Actual Experience and Participation

Children learn best when they are allowed to use all their senses as avenues of learning. Research has shown that young children with disabilities learn best when they are actively engaged in activities (Barnes & Whinnery, 2002; Larkin, 2001; S. A. Raver, 1999). Participatory experience is an essential ingredient in early childhood education. This means the curriculum must be based on real experiences with real things, rather than limited to the verbal discussions and pictures commonly (though not necessarily ideally) used when teaching older children.

Because educators ranging from Dewey to Piaget to the teachers of Reggio Emilia have emphasized the value of real experience as being fundamental to successful education since the beginning of the 20th century, one might think

TEACHER TALK

"I love that one of my daily job requirements is to play. I think this field appeals to those of us who have a playful nature."

this principle need not be reiterated. The persistent influx of word-oriented rather than action-oriented teaching materials on display in the commercial exhibits of most conferences on early childhood, however, and the fact that these materials continue to sell make it evident that this point must be stated very clearly: Young children learn best when they can manipulate materials, experiment, try things out, and talk about what is happening as it takes place. Talking without doing is largely meaningless for a child of tender years.

Play Is an Indispensable Avenue for Learning

Another long-held value in early childhood education is an appreciation of play as a facilitator of learning. Teachers who have watched young children at play know the intense, purposeful seriousness they bring to this activity. Play is the medium used by children to translate experience into something internally meaningful to them. Play clarifies concepts, provides emotional relief, facilitates social development, and creates periods of clearly satisfying delight.

Sometimes teachers see its value only as a teacher-controlled, structured experience used to achieve a specific educational end (e.g., role playing after visiting the fire station), but it is crucial that there be ample time in the curriculum for children's self-initiated play. There is no surer way to tap into the children's real concerns and interests.

A long-held value in early education is an appreciation of play as a facilitator of learning. It is crucial that there be ample time for children's self-initiated play.

The Program Should Be Reflected on Daily

Once a curriculum is planned and put into action, it is also necessary to evaluate the results, and these reflections need to go beyond such statements as "What a terrible day!" or "Things went well!"

Instead teachers should ask themselves the following questions:

• What special interests emerged that I can respond to when planning curriculum pathways?

- How did the day go? Did any hitches and glitches occur?
- If so, how can I rearrange plans and activities so that they move more smoothly for the children next time?
- What did the children learn today?
- How are the children with special concerns getting along?

And finally the most valuable question of all:

- How can I help each child experience success tomorrow?

Thoughtful answers to questions like these will go a long way toward helping build a more effective curriculum for the children as the year moves on.

High-Quality Education Promotes Ethical Standards for Teachers

The following position statement, developed by the NAEYC, is found in *The Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* (NAEYC, 2011): "Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child" (p. 2). This position statement reflects the core values of the early childhood profession's largest organization and resulted from years of dialogue among the NAEYC membership: teachers, directors, professors, and leaders in the field of early childhood education. The Code of Ethical Conduct sets the stage for all that we do with children and families, affirming how important and lasting our work can be. We have a great responsibility ahead of us, and the Code of Ethical Conduct helps us navigate the often-confusing issues regarding children, families, colleagues, and community and society. The code inspires us to make a genuine commitment to early childhood education and to take seriously the vital role we play in children's lives (see Related Organizations and Online Resources at the end of this chapter to access the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct).

High-Quality Education Should Encourage Advocacy

Part of our ethical responsibility extends beyond being a good, developmentally appropriate teacher whom the children and families adore. If we are truly committed to providing the best for young children, then we must advocate for massive changes in our early care system. It is an unfortunate fact that many in this world do not place much value on children or on children's teachers. This attitude is reflected in the low wages and high turnover rates in the early education profession (French, 2010). To enter the field, one needs only a high school diploma or the equivalent, and the average pay in 2010 was $9.28 per hour (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

Studies have shown that when teachers are well compensated and given the proper educational support, they provide higher-quality care (French, 2010; Honig & Hirallal, 1998; Whitebook, Sakai, Gerber, & Howes, 2001). When the opposite is true, it is the children who suffer: Teachers may have unrealistic expectations for children's behavior, punish them inappropriately, and create a climate of failure and fear in the classroom. Additionally,

- Become informed about the educational, social, and political issues that affect children and families. Attend local, state, and national conferences. Subscribe to early childhood journals, such as the NAEYC publication, *Young Children*.

- Join with others to make your voice heard. At the end of each chapter is a list of some of the most vital, relevant organizations. By joining an organization such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the Children's Defense Fund, you support their work and benefit from their many educational and teacher support services. There is no better antidote to burnout than to attend a meeting of impassioned and committed early childhood educators!

- Communicate with families. Once you are aware of the issues that affect children, start discussing them with the children's families in your program. You can provide them with information that will help their family directly (such as recommending an organization that helps find services for children with disabilities after a diagnosis has been made), and you can also encourage the family's advocacy as well.

Figure 1.4
Suggestions for advocating on behalf of children, families, and families of children with special needs

children suffer the results of teachers' feeling so frustrated and unappreciated that they quit their jobs, leaving the children to make new connections with new teachers over and over again throughout their most formative years.

We all have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of children, families, and families of children with special needs so that early childhood education, of which most children now partake, does not inflict harm on our developing citizens. You are encouraged to become informed about the important issues regarding children and families, and to connect with others who are working to create a better situation. Figure 1.4 offers suggestions for how to get started advocating for children, families, and families of children with special needs.

Let's keep in mind that early childhood education is built on a foundation of struggle and the intense efforts of those dedicated to providing children with a better world. Early education programs grew from taking children off the streets to give them the basics of food, shelter, and comfort. Look how far we have come since those times. Although teachers sometimes feel frustrated or "burned out," we should remember how our efforts can succeed. As historian Henry Adams put it in 1907, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops" (p. 20).

The Day Should Be Pleasurable

One way we can affect children for the long run is by helping them form a positive attitude toward school and learning. Probably the most significant value a teacher can convey to children is the conviction that school is satisfying and that they want to return the next day. This point has been deliberately left until last to give it special emphasis in case you have begun to feel bogged down with the sober-sided responsibilities of providing a good program for young children.

Pleasure, enjoyment, humor, and laughter should be very much a part of the children's day.

The experience not only should be pleasurable for the children but also should be a joy for the adults. Young children have their trying moments, but they are also delightful. They see the world in a clear-sighted way that can lend fresh perspective to the eyes of their teacher, and their tendency to live for the present moment is a lesson to us all. Pleasure, enjoyment, humor, and laughter should be very much a part of each day in early childhood education.

SUMMARY

Early childhood education has a noble history that can teach us important lessons for current best practices. Beginning teachers should make use of educational theories that have been tried for many years in order to be most effective.

After more than five decades of research on the effects of early education, and with the addition of recent brain research, the evidence indicates that high-quality education for young children and their families has a lasting, positive impact.

Certain elements are emerging that appear to be common to the majority of effective early childhood programs and schools. These include good human relationships, family inclusion, and a curriculum that is developmentally,

individually, and culturally appropriate. High-quality early education uses reasonable and authentic methods of assessment, incorporates a balance of self-selection and teacher direction, and educates all the child's five selves.

High-quality education for young children is basically orderly but also flexible; it provides for variety in experience, levels of difficulty, and pacing; and it is based on the principles that learning should be the result of actual experience, that play is a significant mode of learning, and above all that the center should be a place of joy for both children and staff. High-quality teachers are intentional in their practice, adhere to ethical standards, and work as early childhood advocates.

Questions and Activities

1. Select a basic activity, such as using tricycles or easel painting, that tends to stay the same throughout the year in many schools, and suggest some variations that would add interest and learning to the activity.
2. Describe some situations in your own educational background in which the learning was primarily accomplished by means of direct instruction, as well as other situations in which the emphasis was on learning by means of experience and participation. Which method did you prefer? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches?
3. As a beginning teacher, how do you feel about the prospect of having parents at school? If a father is helping at school on the day his youngster has a temper tantrum and refuses to come in to lunch, would it be easier to handle this situation if the father were not there? Do you agree completely that parents should be welcomed at school? Why or why not?

Diversity Question

1. How can a teacher best use developmental norms when working with children who have special needs?

Predicament

1. Suppose a parent said to you after touring the school, "Your fees are so high! My babysitter charges less than you do, *and* comes to the house and does the cleaning, too. I don't see why it costs so much to take care of some little kids!" What should you reply?

Self-Check Questions for Review

Content-Related Questions

1. What research findings can you cite to support the thesis that early childhood education is beneficial?
2. What are some of the theoretical foundations of early childhood education, and why should teachers be familiar with them?
3. List several ways in which teachers might generate records that will help them and the parents assess how much the children have learned and what they are like.
4. List and discuss the ingredients that should go into a good day for young children.
5. Name the five selves discussed in this chapter, and tell what aspects of the child each self includes.

Integrative Questions

1. Give an example of a situation with a 3-year-old and with a 7-year-old in which it would be appropriate to use a behavior modification technique.
2. Compare the developmental-interactionist philosophy of teaching to a behavior modification approach. What do they have in common, and in what ways do they differ?
3. This chapter describes several concepts common to both American and Reggian teaching philosophies: learning by doing, inquiry-based learning, and child-centered learning. Explain what you think each of these terms means, and provide a specific example that illustrates how you might implement each of these practices in your classroom of 4-year-olds.

Reference for Further Reading

Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children birth through age 8* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This indispensable resource spells out good teaching practices that are appropriate for infants through age 8. It remains the most influential publication on this subject in the field.

Related Organizations and Online Resources

Center for the Child Care Workforce, a project of the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF). The center's mission is to ensure that the early care and education workforce are well educated, receive better compensation, and have a voice in their workplace. Find out about the Worthy Wage Campaign, a grassroots effort to improve compensation and work environments, at ccw.org.

Head Start and Early Head Start. Head Start is the national school readiness program for families with low incomes. Early Head Start, in cooperation with Zero to Three, is a program to provide services for infants through age 3 years. Reach Early Head Start at ehsnrc.org and Head Start at nhsa.org.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This is the largest membership organization for early childhood educators. Many excellent resources are available, as well as its journal, *Young Children*. NAEYC is an invaluable resource organization for everyone in the early childhood profession. The DAP guidelines and Code of Ethical Conduct can be downloaded from the Resources section at naeyc.org.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, NICHCY is a central clearinghouse for information about disabilities in children and IDEA, the law authorizing special education, among other topics. Information is available at nichcy.org.

Zero to Three. This is a nonprofit organization that provides excellent resources about the first 3 years, including a monthly journal, and the coordination of the Early Head Start program. Information is available at zerotothree.com.

Collaborating with Families

Why certain families seem supportive of your program while others seem critical?

How to open a discussion with parents about a problem their child is having?

How to increase families' interest and participation in their children's learning?

When parent and family engagement activities are systemic and integrated across program foundations and program impact areas, family engagement outcomes are achieved, resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school. Parent and family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011, p. 1)

No matter how dedicated and meticulous we are about establishing a good life for the child at school, teachers must never forget that the most significant part of the young child's environment lies outside the school. Quite rightly, there is a much more profound influence in the child's life: the home and the members of the child's family. Thus it makes good sense, if we hope to establish the best total environment for the child, to include the family as an important part of the early educational experience (Bang, 2009; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Guralnick, 2001; Mendoza, Katz, Robertson, & Rothenberg, 2003; Souto-Manning, 2010). For children with special needs, family involvement is especially crucial. As the 26th Report to Congress on the Implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) emphasized, family involvement improves educational results for children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education,

2004). Family involvement is such a strong predictor of success that it is a required component for both IDEA and Head Start programs (see Chapters 1 and 5 for more discussion about these programs). In the elementary grades, family involvement is equally important: The single best predictor of student success in school is the level of parental involvement in a child's education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

There are a number of formal and informal ways to build links between home and school. Such involvement can be as varied as making home visits, inviting family members to volunteer in the classroom, or asking them to serve on the advisory board. All these avenues encourage interchange and communication between families and teachers if they are well done. Infant caregivers and home care providers find that close bonds with the child's family come with the territory.

Although our work is primarily with young children, some of our most lasting and important work is with adults. To be the best teachers for young children, we must also develop our skills in communicating with adults. One communication skill lies at the heart of them all: the ability to talk with others in a sincere, nonthreatening way.

OPENING THE DOOR TO GOOD COMMUNICATION

The first step to good communication with families begins with our attitude. Too often teachers view parents and family members negatively, with trepidation or judgment. Some teachers dread conferences and rush through them as quickly as possible, and others refuse to let parents in their classroom. Research has shown that parent involvement not only enhances children's academic achievement and behavior at school but also improves overall program quality and staff morale (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Mendoza et al., 2003; Michigan Department of Education, 2002; Powell, 1998). For the benefit of the children, teachers must avoid an "us versus them" mentality and instead welcome families into their children's programs as partners.

UNDERSTANDING FAMILIES

Teachers in the United States work with a wide range of families. In order to communicate effectively with families, it is important to have an understanding of what family means to the children we serve.

Family Diversity

Just as each child is unique, so, too, is each family, with its own dynamics, psychology, and ways of being (R. M. Barrera, 2001; Mendoza et al., 2003). Our job is to understand the child's family culture and to support it as best we

can. When we meet with families for the first time, it is important to ask questions as well as offer information. By asking for input, we convey to families that their experiences are valued and an essential part of their child's education. In this way, teachers and families can work together as a team to provide the best possible environment for the child.

Teachers must find out what each child's family situation is from the start. Gone are the days when the typical family consisted of a breadwinning father who was married to a stay-at-home, child-rearing mother: Only 13% of all families in the United States fit that model, and three out of five preschoolers have their mother in the labor force (Cohany & Sok, 2007; NACCRRA, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Families in the United States reflect the same diversity that is seen throughout our society. It behooves early childhood professionals to approach children's families with an open mind and an open heart, with no preconceived notions about what a proper family should be.

As Figure 2.1 shows, teachers should be prepared to work with children who live in all sorts of family situations. Children today often come from non-traditional families that can be headed by a single parent, a grandparent, or a teenager. Many children have lesbian, gay, transgendered, or same-sex parents. Of the 646,464 same-sex couples counted in the 2010 census, one-fourth are raising children under the age of 18 (Gates & Cooke, 2011; James, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). To be effective with all the children in our care, we must welcome each family with openness and respect, even if the family's structure is different from our own.

Many children today are being raised by single men or fathers who are highly involved caregivers. It is important for teachers to acknowledge and support the involvement of men in children's lives. Teachers can make men feel welcome and valued in child care programs by encouraging their
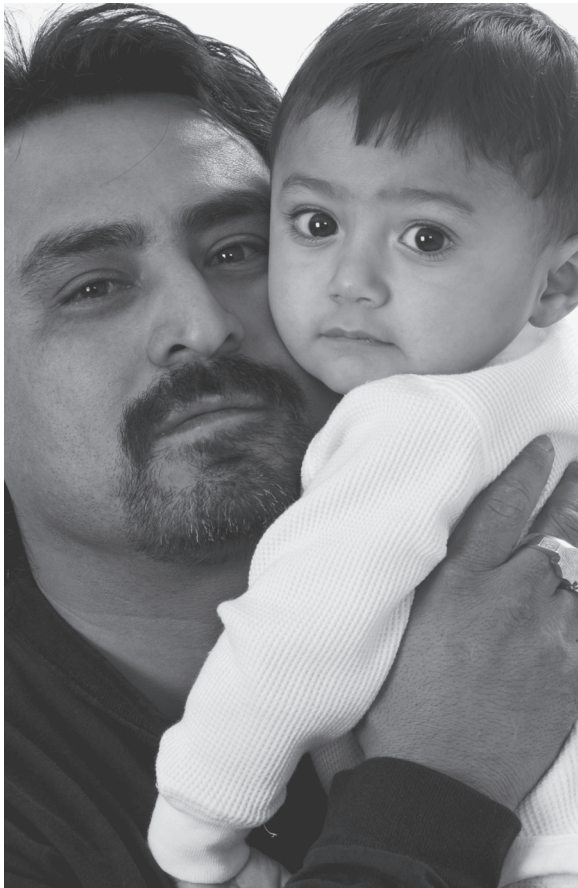
Of the approximately 20 million children under age 5:

- 1 in 2 has a mother in the labor force.
- 1 in 3 lives in a single-parent family.
- 1 in 5 lives in poverty.
- 1 in 3 was born to unmarried parents.
- 1 in 5 has an immigrant mother.
- 1 in 8 was born to a teenage mother.
- 1 in 2 was born to minority parents.

Figure 2.1
Key facts about American families and children today

Sources: American Community Survey 2006–2010, 5-Year Estimates, 2011a, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau; *The State of America's Children Yearbook, 2004,* 2010, Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund; *United States Census 2010,* 2011a, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau; *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements Spring 2010,* 2011b, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Support the involvement of men in children's lives.

"The families in my program seem really stressed. I made an area in the hallway with comfortable seating, drapes, and a pretty table lamp that lends a soft light. When the parents come to pick up their child after a long day at work, they just seem to relax into my little 'family space' and connect with their child. It's lovely."

participation, directing questions at them as well as at mothers, and making sure all family communication is made in a nonsexist way. Further discussion about the involvement of men in early childhood can be found in Chapter 4.

Challenges to Working with Families

In these times when more than 68% of all mothers with preschool-age children work outside the home (NACCRRA, 2011), the additional burdens of fatigue and guilt may take a toll on parent energies. As a result, although the parents remain as loving and concerned as ever, the time for contact between school and home is diminished. Research has shown that one of the greatest challenges to family involvement in school is time (Souto-Manning, 2010).

When families *do* have contact, they, like the teacher, feel vulnerable to criticism. After all, their child, who is an extension of themselves, is on view. First-time parents particularly can be quite frightened of the teacher's opinion, and all families yearn to know that the teacher likes their child and that the child is doing well.

Parents of infants face additional challenges, often feeling conflicted, if not outright guilty, when they leave their baby in the care of others. It is now more common for infants and toddlers to be in a child care program than to be cared for at home by a parent (NACCRRA, 2010, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b, c). When parents leave their baby in child care, they are taking a big leap of faith: They are trusting the caregiver to love and take good care of their child—and they can't help worrying about the many things that could go wrong. Good infant caregivers know that parents who have their baby in child care often experience stressful amounts of worry, anxiety, and guilt.

Suggestions for Establishing a Good Relationship Between Family and Teacher

Show Genuine Concern

Probably the most essential ingredient in a satisfactory relationship between teacher and family is that the teacher has the child's welfare truly at heart and is genuinely concerned

about the child. Our experience has been that when families believe this statement to be true—which means, of course, that it has to *be* true and not just something the teacher *wishes* were true—when families really sense the teacher's goodwill, they will forgive the teacher any inadvertent transgressions, and the relationship will warm up as trust develops.

Genuine concern and caring can be expressed in a variety of ways. Faithful caretaking is one way. For example, the preschool teacher takes pains to see that everything the children have made is valued by being put in their cubbies for them to take home, their belongings are kept track of, noses are wiped when they need to be, and although the children may not be the pristinely clean youngsters at the end of the day that they were upon arrival, they are tidied up and have had their faces washed before their family members pick them up. Teachers also show they care by carefully enforcing the health and safety regulations and by planning a curriculum that is interesting, varied, and suited to the needs of individual children. It is especially important to convey your warmth and interest to the families of children with special needs. Assure these families that you are paying attention to their children and making every effort to adapt the program to meet their needs.

Families of infants need to know their baby is in good hands. Many infant caregivers find it useful to keep notes throughout the day that record such things as feeding times and what was eaten, diaper changes, and bottles and medicine given. In addition, we need information from the family on a daily basis: How did the child sleep last night? Is he or she getting a new tooth or ready to try a new food? This sort of communication should be built into infant and toddler programs so that it occurs naturally every

Show families your genuine concern for their children. The parents of this baby can see that his safety is monitored even while he is in the crib.

day. Brief written notes about something the child did that day, telephone calls, casual conversation, and scheduled meetings all contribute to effective communication with families (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2006; Honig, 2002; Lally et al., 2003).

Another way for the teacher to show concern is by expressing genuine interest in each child to the family. For example, it is always sound practice to comment on something the child has enjoyed that day. It may be the statement, "I think Nathan is making friends with our new boy, Manuel; they spent a lot of time together in art center today," or it might be, "Maggie really loves our new bunny; she fed him and watched him half the morning." These comments assure the parent that the child has had attention and that the teacher is aware of the child as an individual, rather than as just one of the troupe. Teachers in the elementary grades can pass on important developmental information gleaned through assessments and child evaluations, and they have particular responsibility for discussing these issues with parents: alerting them to when assessments take place and how they will be used.

Develop Cultural Competence

Teachers can also demonstrate they truly care about the children and their families by learning about different points of view concerning child rearing that families from cultures other than the teacher's own may have (R. M. Barrera, 2001; Gonzalez-Mena, 2007; Mendoza et al., 2003).

As Gonzalez-Mena (2007) points out, not only may points of view differ in a general way from group to group, but also attitudes toward the value of their own backgrounds vary within members of each group. These attitudes range from the desire of the parents to have their children blend completely with the dominant culture to an equally strong desire to have their youngsters respect and retain the parents' personal values related to their own culture. As Figure 2.2 illustrates, there are many steps teachers can take every day to ensure that family diversity is respected in the classroom.

Still another kind of caring can be indicated on a subtler level by letting the family know that the teacher is on the child's side *but not on the child's side as opposed to the family's*. Occasionally teachers fall into the fantasy of thinking, "If only I could take that child home with me for a week and provide a steady, loving environment." Or sometimes a child will say in a rush of affection, "Oh, I wish you were my daddy (or mommy)!" To avoid an emotionally confusing and difficult situation for the child, it is important to

Learn the family's point of view about how to best raise their child.

- Make families feel welcome. Greet each child and family member upon arrival. Let the families see that you value their child as an individual by having a special place or cubby for the child's belongings, the child's name printed, and evidence of the child's work in the room.
- Learn from the children and families in your program about their culture and family. Develop open communication with each family about their beliefs, background, customs, values, and goals for their child.
- Offer the same respect and treatment you give biological parents to guardians, grandparents, adoptive parents, and same-sex parents.
- Offer the same respect and treatment you give mothers to fathers and male caregivers.
- Get in the habit of saying, "parent," "guardian," or simply, "family" rather than only "mother" or "father." Ask families what terms they use to describe their family.
- Use a broad range of materials (books, photos, music, etc.) in the classroom that represent different types of families and diverse cultures and gender images.
- Make sure the family and culture of each child is reflected in your classroom and curriculum.
- Ask children and families to teach you some words in their native language.
- Be sensitive during holidays. Ask families what they feel is appropriate.
- Use natural classroom situations to discuss diversity. Talk about differences (race, culture, language, gender) and also commonalities. Be careful not to reinforce stereotypes; encourage children to broaden their view ("You have a Mommy and Daddy at home but Leo has two Mommies who take care of him.").

Figure 2.2
Suggestions for embracing all families

clarify the teacher's role by gently replying, "We are having fun, and I like you, too; but, of course, you already have a daddy [or mommy]. I'm your teacher. I take care of you at school, and your parents take care of you at home." This approach prevents rivalry and makes a friendly alliance between parents and teacher more likely.

It is difficult to be on the family's side if the teacher blames them for all the child's problems. Such disapproval, even if unspoken, cannot help being sensed by families (Baker & Manfredi/Petitt, 2004; Murphy, 1997). In any situation in which you feel critical, you might find it helpful to ask yourself, if you were this child's parent, with that particular set of problems and circumstances, could you do much better?

As the teacher, you can put parents at ease by letting them know that you are concerned about the child, that you are on both the child's and the family's sides, and that you do not think everything the child does is the family's fault. After all, families, like teachers, also want what is best for their children. A sense of common, shared concern is worth working for because once family members feel its existence, they are freer to work with the teacher on the child's behalf.

Of course, sometimes, despite our best intentions, a relationship with a child's family may not be so harmonious. When this is the case, it can be helpful to know how to handle such encounters.

WHAT IF THE RELATIONSHIP IS NOT GOOD?

It is inevitable that, from time to time, a parent or guardian will make teachers so angry it is almost impossible to resist the temptation to lose one's temper—a response that usually makes things worse. Fortunately there are alternative ways of coping with angry feelings that can help teachers (and other people) retain control of themselves and the situation.

The Preamble: What to Do Before the Situation Arises

A good way to begin is to know one's own points of vulnerability. You might picture these points as being a series of red buttons people can push—red buttons that, when pushed, make you see red, too! Different things make different people angry. For some teachers it's the person who is bossy and domineering, whereas for others it's the parent who is always late or who sends the child to school with a deep cough and runny nose. Whatever the buttons are, it is helpful to identify them in advance; once they are identified, it is possible to summon the extra reserves of self-control that are needed when someone begins to push one.

Coping with the Initial Encounter: What to Do When That Button Is Pushed

Surviving an encounter with an angry adult is really a three-part process. It includes the immediate first encounter, what happens afterward, and the final resolution of the situation.

When you are confronted with an angry complaint, rather than jumping right in with a defensive reply the more effective approach is to wait a minute before responding and actually *listen* to what the person is saying (Baker & Manfredi/Petitt, 2004). These precious seconds provide valuable lead time that allows an opportunity to recognize the anger inside oneself and to consider the reply before saying something you'll regret later.

Next, instead of defending or explaining, take time to rephrase what the complainer is saying, adding a description of the person's feelings. *There is no more effective way of dealing with strong feelings than using this response.* For example, you might say, "You don't want me to . . . ," or, "You're upset because I . . . ."

After the person has calmed down, it may be appropriate to explain your side of the situation, or it may not. Many times, when a matter of policy is in question ("You mean you lost her mittens again?" or, "If you let that kid bite Kim once more, I'm calling licensing."), the wisest thing to do is refer it to the director or at least say you'll need to discuss it with the person in charge. This tactic is called "referring it to a committee," and it serves the invaluable purposes of spreading around the responsibility for the decision and providing a cooling-off period.

For the bravest and securest teachers, there is another way to cope with the initial encounter. After listening and rephrasing an attack, some people

are comfortable enough to put their own honest feelings into words. "I'm feeling pretty upset [angry, frightened, worried] right now about what you've said. I don't know what to say. Let me think it over, and I'll get back to you." This kind of self-disclosure is too risky for some people to attempt, but it is an effective way of dealing with feelings for those who feel able to try it.

What to Do After the Complainer Departs

The problem with controlling anger as we have suggested is that it does not always melt away after the attacker has left. It is important that teachers respect families' privacy rights and refrain from talking about the encounter with every teacher on the playground. However, the opportunity to ventilate feelings in a safe place is a wonderful luxury that eventually can lead to forming constructive solutions to whatever problem exists. Discussing the situation with your director, principal, or another trusted professional—*in private, away from the children and other parents*—can offer much-needed support as well as help solve the problem.

Consulting the *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* (NAEYC, 2011) and the book *Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator: Using the NAEYC Code* by Feeney, Freeman, and Pizzolongo (2012) can also offer support and insight. The NAEYC Code emphasizes the importance of our work with families. It helps teachers grapple with the important ethical issues that arise while trying to provide the best for all children and families.

It is also useful to think through the best- and worst-case scenarios during that discussion. Facing up to the worst that could happen when you speak with the family again and the best that might happen will reduce anxiety a great deal and increase confidence when the meeting actually takes place.

The Return Engagement

One benefit of waiting and then returning to discuss an emotion-laden problem is that the other person has had time to calm down, too. He or she may even be a little ashamed about what happened, so it may be necessary to help the person save face.

It can also be helpful to include a third person in the discussion, particularly if the problem has been "referred to a committee." Many times this person is the director, principal, or someone else who can support both teacher and parent.

This is the point at which various alternatives for solving the problem can be proposed, so it is a good idea to have several such possibilities in mind that are acceptable to the school and that allow the parent the opportunity to participate in the final solution, too.

Whatever that solution turns out to be, if you have listened, rephrased, dealt with your own anger in safe surroundings, and offered explanations or solutions, it is probable that the parent will see you as a reasonable

- Know your own points of vulnerability. What pushes your buttons and makes you see red? Being aware of your own anger buttons will help you maintain self-control when they are pushed.
- When your button is pushed, don't react immediately with a response; rather, *listen*. Listen to what the other person has said and then rephrase it. ("You're upset because . . ." or "You don't like it when I . . .")
- Decide whether to express your side of the issue right then or "buy some time." You can always say, "We're both upset by this. Let's think about it and talk later." It can be easier to communicate once there has been a cooling-off period.
- While being careful to respect the family's privacy, sometimes it is wise to discuss the matter with your director or a colleague. Make sure this is done in private and away from the children.
- Imagine the worst and best possible outcomes; know what steps you should take in either case.
- Return to the discussion (perhaps inviting another to join, such as the school director) and offer alternatives for solving the problem. Have several plans to offer, and work with the family member to reach a shared decision.

person. You will have the comfort of knowing you have done nothing that you need be ashamed of at a later date. Figure 2.3 illustrates the steps to take when dealing with a difficult relationship with a child's family.

MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS: KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Fortunately most relationships with families do not involve such difficult encounters. For *all* families in your program, it is important to keep communication lines open. Thus it is necessary for teachers to be accessible in two senses of the word. First, they must be approachable because they care about the children; second, they must be physically available when the parents are around the school.

In preprimary programs it is possible and even desirable to arrange the schedule so that one teacher is free to greet families during the first and last 15 minutes of the day or during peak arrival and departure times. The teacher who is free from other responsibilities at that time can see each parent in countless casual meetings and build relationships of friendliness and trust more easily. The sheer informality of this encounter robs it of a good deal of threat. Chatting right by the door, the parents know they can hasten away if the conversation takes too threatening a turn. In addition they are likely to see the teacher in a variety of moods and predicaments that increase the teacher's humanity.

This repeated, consistent contact is far superior to relying solely on the more formal and frightening "conference" that may occur once or twice a semester. After a comfortable, everyday relationship is well established, an occasional conference with a longer uninterrupted opportunity to talk can be used to better advantage.

A helpful way to broaden teacher-parent communication skills is to think over past encounters with a parent to determine who is doing most of the talking. If this analysis reveals that the teacher is talking most of the time, it probably means that either the chats are too hurried or the teacher needs to make certain he or she is truly listening to what the parent has to say.

COUNSELING WITH FAMILIES

Once lines of communication are open, the question remains, "What do we do then?" When people talk together, many levels of relating can exist between them. Depending on the situation, all these levels can be used by the teacher throughout the year.

Message the Family

The simplest level is a verbal or written message in which the teacher may say to the family, "This is what we did in school today," or, "Tanya learned to ride the scooter today." On this level at least the family knows that the teacher wants them to know what is happening at school. Most new relationships have to start about here.

Provide Information and Comfort

On another level the teacher acts as the supportive information provider and general comforter. In this guise the teacher interprets the child's behavior to the family on the basis of extensive experience with other children. For example, the simple information that many 4-year-olds relish "disgraceful" language can be a great relief to a family secretly tormented by the worry that they suddenly have a pervert on their hands.

Listen, Guide, and Work Together

At yet another level the parent-teacher relationship has more of a counseling flavor to it. This is guidance, but not guidance in the sense that the teacher tells the parents what to do. Guidance means the teacher works with the family in terms of conscious motivation and behavior to help them discover what may be causing various behavior problems in the child and to help them figure out how to cope with them. Even novice teachers can do considerable good by offering themselves in a guidance role to parents in need of help, especially if they concentrate on listening rather than prescribing (Baker & Manfredi/Petitt, 2004).

Excluding the occasional special situation in which more professional help is required, what families need in order to work out a difficulty is the chance to talk out how they feel and evaluate whether a tentative solution is right for them and their unique child. Tremendous comfort comes to a distressed family when they are given the opportunity to air a problem with someone who can listen attentively and who is not too shaken by the confession that the children have been sitting behind the back fence doing you know what! Allowing them to express their feelings of shame, or occasionally even anguish, over their child's behavior is a positive benefit to offer families in a counseling situation.

It is also true that teachers, who have known literally hundreds of children, do have a broader background of experience than most parents. It seems only right to pool this knowledge with the family's as long as the teacher's alternatives are offered in such a way that the family feels free to accept or reject them. Families will be able to use this range of knowledge most easily if the teacher points out that even a broad knowledge about children in general cannot match the family's "expert" knowledge of the individual child.

Instead of providing instant answers to all problems posed by families, the teacher will find it more useful to ask such questions as "Why don't you tell me what you've tried already?" or "What are your thoughts about what to do next?" By asking the family questions, the teacher encourages the participation that will lead to more successful solutions.

Be Patient with Families

TEACHER TALK

"I look forward to conferences. I spend a lot of time preparing for them, and it's kind of exciting to present the information to the families. They are always eager to hear how their child is doing, and I learn so much from them in return."

Another cornerstone of good counseling is patience. It seems to be human nature that we want instant results, but change often takes a long time. Teachers might feel frustrated when a referral to a specialist is declined; however, it doesn't mean the family will never heed the suggestion—it may simply be that they are not ready right *now*. For example, parents may not be ready this year to face the problem of Ari's temper tantrums and hyperactivity, but they have at least heard that the possibility of a problem exists, and the next professional person who approaches them may have greater success because the ground has been prepared.

PRACTICAL POINTERS ABOUT CONDUCTING A CONFERENCE

Getting ready for the conference is as important as the conference itself, since neither teachers nor families want to waste time just chatting. Preparation may involve accumulating a series of quick observations or developmental checklists if these are used by the school. Some teachers also take photographs of significant events or activities the child has participated in and find that sharing these at the beginning of the conference starts conversation off on a friendly note. When these as well as other materials are assembled in a portfolio, it provides a useful, consistent record of how and what the child is doing while at school.

In addition to these tangible documents, it helps focus the conference to think through the points to be covered before beginning, but at the same time it is important to remember that a conference is just that: It is an opportunity to *confer and collaborate.* So, while making plans on what to cover, it is also essential to allow plenty of time and opportunity for parents to talk and to raise concerns of their own. Always bear in mind that even more important than exchanging information is building and maintaining the bond of warmth and trust between teacher and family (Koch & McDonough, 1999).

It is helpful to *set a clear time limit at the beginning* so that you and the family can pace yourselves. A stated time limit also prevents a sense of rejection when the teacher must end the conference.

Avoid Interruptions

Of course, avoiding interruptions is easier said than done sometimes, but most parents resent the teacher's or director's taking a telephone call during a conference. Doing so not only interrupts the flow of talk but also infringes on the parents' rightful time, and parents of young children are often paying a caregiver for the privilege of attending the conference (the child, of course, should not be present).

Beginning the Conference

Perhaps the best way to begin a conference is to encourage families to express their concerns first. "Have you special things in mind you want to talk over about Sarah?" Even though their initial response may be, "Well, no, not really," this kind of early opening question often enables families to bring something up later in the conference they were too shy to mention at first. More frequently, however, the parent will leap at this chance and start right in with a genuine concern, often phrased as a return question: "Well, I was wondering, how is she . . . ?" It is gratifying how often this concern is related to that of the teacher.

Some additional nonthreatening ways to get the ball rolling include sharing with the family the most positive traits you see in their children, what you like about them, who they play with, what they enjoy doing at school, and all the new things they are interested in or learning. If you do have concerns about a child, it is important to leave those until after you have already expressed your appreciation for the child. When you start out sharing positive information, the family can see that you truly have the child's best interest at heart when you have to bring up a more difficult topic.

During the Conference, Stay as Relaxed as Possible

Take time to really listen to what the family says. (A good way to monitor yourself is to check whether during conversations you are usually busy

formulating a reply in your own mind. If you find yourself doing this habitually, it is probably an indication that you should focus your attention more completely on the speaker and be less concerned about your response.) If you think of the conference as being a time for the family to do most of the talking, it will help you at least to share the time more equally.

Drawing the Conference to a Close

As the time to close draws near, you can signal this in several ways. (Remember that the wise teacher has mentioned the potential limit in the beginning in some tactful fashion.) These ending signals are as varied as shifting a little in your chair and (in desperate circumstances in which past experience has indicated that a parent is insensitive to time limits) having someone primed to interrupt casually.

It is always worthwhile to sum up what has been said as part of the closing process: "I am really glad we had a chance to talk. Even though Rosie is getting along so well, it never hurts to touch base, does it? I'll remember what you said about the allergy tests. We'll make sure she gets water instead of milk and that the other children understand and don't tease her about it," or, "I'm sorry to hear your family's going through that. We're here if there's something we can do to help. Give me a ring anytime, and meanwhile we'll do those special things with Kelly we worked out today and let you know how they turn out."

What to Do After the Conference

It is vital to follow up on any promises or plans you and the family have made together. For the busy teacher who has spoken with 15 or 20 families, it can be all too easy to forget something or to defer doing it. But for the families who have only that one particular conference to recall, it is much easier to remember. If you wish to maintain a condition of trust between you and the families you serve, it is necessary that *you* remember, too. This is one reason it is valuable to make notes immediately following the conference. They can serve as a reminder of promises and plans that should be carried out.

Notes also provide useful takeoff points for the next conference. One of the authors has even known them to be valuable in court, when a teacher was asked to document that a parent had demonstrated a faithful interest in the well-being of her child by attending a series of conferences during the year.

Finally, Remember That Information Shared by Parents During a Conference Is Confidential

It is unethical, as well as unwise, to repeat to anyone else what was said in private, unless that person (the director or principal, perhaps, or another teacher who works with the child) has a genuine need to know that information (certainly if you are concerned about the child's welfare, you must contact the appropriate agency right away). Indeed, if you foresee the need to share such

material with another person, it is a good idea to ask the family first (except, of course, in cases of abuse or neglect). That way you do not risk violating their trust. The *Code of Ethical Conduct* (NAEYC, 2011) reinforces the importance of confidentiality for early childhood educators and can assist teachers in behaving ethically.

Limits to Guidance Work

When planning and carrying out conferences, we must also recognize that some behavior and development problems are beyond the teacher's ability, training, and time to handle. It is vital to be clear about where to draw the line and how far to go in guidance work. One rule of thumb is "When in doubt, refer." If the situation looks serious or does not respond to matter-of-fact remedies, it is time to suggest a specialist. In general it is too risky and takes more advanced training than a typical teacher possesses to draw conclusions and offer interpretations to parents about deep, complex reasons for behavior. Fortunately we can rely on highly trained, skilled specialists to solve serious problems, so let's leave Oedipus and his troublesome kin to our psychiatric cohorts. However, keep in mind that when making an outside referral, you must do so with the utmost sensitivity to the family, reassuring them they can rely on you for support.

BEYOND THE CONFERENCE: FURTHER STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING FAMILIES

Joyce Epstein (Michigan Department of Education, 2002) of Johns Hopkins University encourages family involvement in their children's education at six different levels. These levels of family involvement should be supported by teachers throughout the program and throughout the year—not only at conference time: "The main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life" (p. 3). The six types of involvement in Epstein's framework are

1. *Parenting.* Teachers can help families establish a home environment that supports their children's learning. Teachers can also support parents in their own growth and education through parent education workshops and other suggestions for parent learning (courses to support family literacy, college, or GED classes). Finally, teachers should assist families in finding local support programs for health, nutrition, and other social services.

Parent volunteers in early childhood programs benefit all the children and create strong family-school bonds.

2. *Communicating.* In addition to parent conferences, teachers should establish effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication,

such as phone calls, newsletters, and information about standards and assessments. Teachers should also use language translators to assist families as needed.

3. *Volunteering.*   Teachers actively recruit and organize family support in the classroom and the school. A parent room and resource center is a good way to welcome family involvement.

4. *Learning at home.*   Teachers provide families with information about how they can help their children at home through reading and homework help. Elementary teachers should provide families with information on the skills their children need in all subjects at each grade.

5. *Decision making.*   Teachers include parents in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives in the school structure. Teachers encourage participation in the PTA/PTO and other family organizations, school councils, and parent committees. In addition, families are encouraged to join advocacy groups to lobby for school reform and improvements.

6. *Collaborating with community.*   Teachers identify community resources and services to strengthen school programs, children's development, and family practices. Teachers provide families with information about community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs and services. They help to link children's learning skills and talents with extracurricular programs.

Figure 2.4 offers specific suggestions on how to increase the six types of family involvement.

FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Young children are as subject to stress and strain when a crisis strikes their families as adults are, but this reaction may be difficult for the family to recognize. They often hope that if nothing is said, the children will be unaware of the problem. Or they may be so overwhelmed by the crisis that they have little emotional reserve available to help the children through their troubles at the same time. But children are keen sensors of emotional climates, and they are aware of telephone conversations, comments by neighbors, media news reports, and so forth. Indeed, the secrecy and avoidance often practiced by families when crises occur may serve only to deepen the child's anxiety. Instead of worsening the problem by failing to deal with it, it is far better to reduce the child's misery, when we can, by facing facts squarely and by providing as much stability as possible (Alat, 2002; Close, 2002; "Helping Young Children," 2001; K. Miller, 2003).

It is important to realize that adverse circumstances do not always weaken children. Children are remarkably resilient. They are often able to rise above the most dire of situations in a way that is a marvel and an inspiration to adults (Edelman, 2001; Kersey & Malley, 2005; Levin, 2003; Wolkoff, 2002).
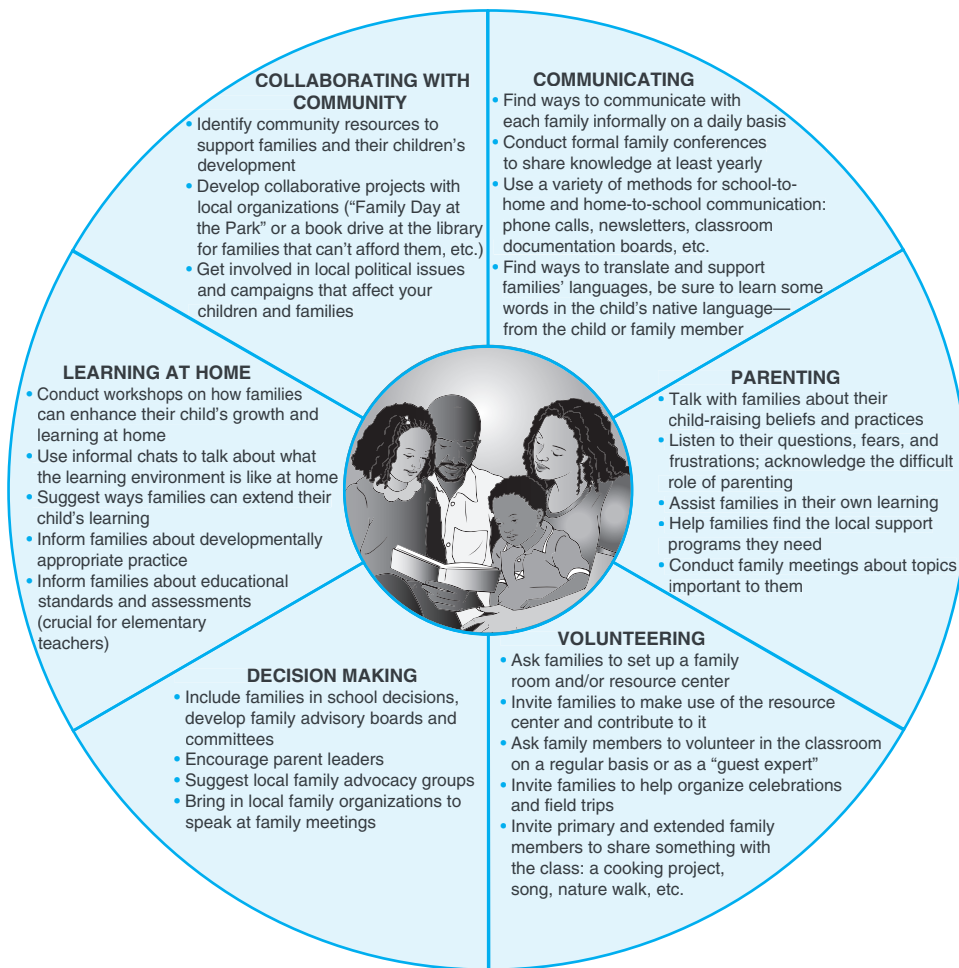
Figure 2.4
Ways to increase the six types of family involvement

Source: Based on "Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parent Involvement," in What Research Says About Parent Involvement in Children's Education in Relation to Academic Achievement, 2002, Lansing, MI: Michigan State Department of Education.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRISIS?

We usually think of a crisis as being something sudden, and surely death or illness or a trip to the emergency room falls in this category. Other crises are of longer duration: the mental illness or substance abuse of a parent, a divorce, a new baby, physical abuse, moving to a new neighborhood, and even adjusting to child care outside the home.

Some crises are unhappy events—loss of a job, for example—and some are happier occasions—a marriage, perhaps, or the adoption of a child. The one thing all crises have in common, whether sudden or chronic, unhappy or joyful, is that they involve change. These changes occur far more commonly

than one would wish. For example, it is projected that nearly half of all babies born today will spend some time in a one-parent family, usually as a result of separation or divorce (CDF, 2012), and one in three children will be poor at some point in their childhood (CDF, 2012).

Some General Principles for Helping Families Deal with Crises

There is no other time in life when the family is more important to the child than during a time of crisis (Pawl, 2002). Teachers, psychologists, social workers, and sometimes police officers may also offer meaningful aid, but the family is the most significant influence; for this reason the fundamental goal of the teacher should be to support the family as well as possible. There are a number of ways of giving support.

Make Certain the Families Understand That It Is Better to Include Children in the Situation than to Exclude Them

Particularly in matters of death, serious family illness, or job loss, adults may attempt to shield children from what is happening, but as mentioned before, children always know when something is wrong. Families may not realize how frightened youngsters can become when they are left to fantasize about the nature of the trouble or the reason for it. It is the primeval fear of the unknown. As a remedy, the teacher should encourage the family to explain in simple terms, *but not gory detail,* the nature of the emergency (Hogan & Graham, 2001; K. Miller, 2003).

The same recommendation applies to expressing feelings: Children should be allowed to participate in feelings of concern or grief, rather than be excluded (Hogan & Graham, 2001; Levin, 2003; Willis, 2002). This principle should be followed within reason. The point to get across to the family is that it is all right for children to understand that grown-ups sometimes feel sad or frightened or upset—as long as this understanding is mingled with steady assurances from family members that the child will be taken care of and that life will continue (NAEYC, 2001; Pawl, 2002; Willis, 2002).

Allow children to experience and express their feelings during a crisis; assure them they will be taken care of and life will continue.

Try Not to Overreact, No Matter What the Family Tells You

Teachers can be of little help if they allow themselves to become as upset as the families are over a crisis, although no one can deny that crises such as suicide or rape are deeply shocking to everyone. However, if teachers can present a model of relative calm as well as concern, they can influence families to behave in the same manner. By providing information on what will help the child,

teachers can encourage the institution of rational steps in dealing with the situation.

Teachers should also guard themselves against being overcome with pity for a child or the parents, since pity is not beneficial for the family. One little boy, returning to school after his mother died, was greeted by a teacher who threw her arms around him and burst into tears, saying, "Oh, you poor baby! What are you and your father going to do now?" This unfortunate response overwhelmed the boy and froze him into an inexpressive state from which it was very difficult to retrieve him. One would think that an adult would have more sense, but crises do strange things to people.

Do Not Violate the Privacy of the Family

Particularly when something sensational has happened, be it a car accident or a home burning to the ground, it can be tempting to participate in the tragedy by gossiping about it with others. It is impossible to avoid discussion of such events entirely when they are common knowledge in the community, but care should be taken to keep private details private. For one thing, family members who hear the teacher repeat personal details are bound to conclude that the teacher makes a habit of gossiping about their personal affairs. For another thing, behaving in this way is a breach of professional ethics (NAEYC, 2011).

Offer Yourself as a Resource

Being a good listener is one way to offer yourself as a resource as long as parents do not come to feel that you are mainly interested in the sensational aspects of the crisis or that you cannot wait for them to stop talking so that you can offer advice. Remember also that sometimes families do not want any help; this desire must be respected, too.

Sometimes, after the emergency aspect has subsided, parents find it helpful when the teacher lends them a good reference book. If the resource center has a reserve of at least a few such basic books on hand, they can be instantly available when needed.

Finally, the teacher can also be a resource for referral to other supporting agencies. It is necessary to be careful not to offer referral resources too hastily lest the family get the idea that you want to get rid of them and their uncomfortable problem. Sometimes, however, it is better not to wait. Crises that result from a sudden deep shock or trauma, such as being in a severe automobile accident, experiencing rape, or witnessing a murder or suicide, require immediate psychological attention (Hogan & Graham, 2001).

Child Abuse, Neglect, Sexual Molestation, and Emotional Mistreatment

It is the sad case that the mistreatment of children continues today. Teachers must be prepared to deal with this most onerous side of their job compassionately and effectively.

Recognizing Child Abuse

Teachers have an ethical and often a legal responsibility to report any suspected child abuse (NAEYC, 1997, 2011). This responsibility is referred to as *mandated reporting*. Teachers should understand that when we make a report to the proper agency, we do not have to prove—or even feel certain—that abuse has occurred. It is the teacher's role not to determine culpability, but to protect the child from harm *if there is any suspicion at all*. We must all be knowledgeable about what to look for and what to do when there is the possibility of abuse. Figure 2.5 details the common signs of abuse and neglect.

What to Do When Abuse Is Suspected

Teachers who discover evidence of abuse are very upset about it. They may find it difficult to believe that such a "nice" family could do a thing like that, and so they deny it, or they may be so frightened for the child's safety that they do not think clearly and therefore act impulsively. For this reason, before going any further with this discussion, *it is important to emphasize that handling such cases requires skill and delicacy* (NAEYC, 1998b, 2011). The consequences of unsuccessful management may be so serious that we cannot risk jeopardizing such cases by acting in an ill-considered way. *Therefore, teachers must not suddenly plunge into the problem by accusing the parents or even reveal suspicions by questioning them or the child too closely*. Instead, if they suspect a case of abuse, they should contact whatever agency or individual in their community has the responsibility for handling such cases and report it. *They should ask these people for advice and do what they are told, to the best of their ability.*

How to Find Help

The agency the teacher should seek out is whatever agency in the community is responsible for children's protective services. These agencies go by different names in different parts of the country: Department of Social Services, Social Rehabilitation Service, Bureau of Children and Family Services, and so forth. Still another way to locate protective services is to ask the public health nurse whom to call. If no such agency exists, as is sometimes the case in small or rural communities, the police department, a mental health clinic, a child psychologist or psychiatrist, or a knowledgeable pediatrician should be asked for help. The organization Child Help USA can also be of assistance in filing a report; they can be reached at the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD).

Action Should Be Prompt

Since abusers often repeat their behavior, prompt action is advisable; yet teachers sometimes hesitate to get involved. The teacher should realize that all states now have mandatory reporting laws and that many of these specifically identify teachers as being among those people *required* to report cases in which abuse is suspected (NAEYC, 1998b, 2011). Understand that this means in many states a teacher can be prosecuted for *not* reporting suspected child

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:
- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:
- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:
- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.

Signs of Physical Abuse
Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school.
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:
- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

Signs of Neglect
Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:
- Is frequently absent from school.

Figure 2.5
Common signs of child abuse and neglect

- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:
- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:
- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to have clothing changed.
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:
- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:
- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head banging, for example).
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caregiver:
- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.

Figure 2.5
(*Continued*)

abuse. Even when teachers are not specifically mentioned, the law is generally on the side of anyone reporting such a case "in good faith." Besides the necessity of conforming to the law, *reporting such cases is an ethical and moral responsibility the teacher must not overlook* (NAEYC, 1998b, 2011).

Helping the Child's Family After the Referral Has Been Made

Even when teachers have taken the expert's advice and have handled the referral successfully, and even if the family is receiving help, teachers must still deal with their feelings about the child and the family. The relief to families that such a professional help provides, as well as the protection and education of the child it affords, means that continuing at school is important. Here we are confronted with a paradox. Teachers are more than likely experiencing feelings of revulsion and outrage over what the parents have done, and their impulse may be to judge and punish them. Yet experts tell us that what the parents need, among many other things, is understanding and acceptance—which they may have been woefully short on in their own childhood.

Helping the Child While the Family Is in Treatment

Most material having to do with the treatment of child abuse deals with the treatment of the adults or amelioration of the family's environment, but the child needs help, too—help that must go beyond the simple level of physical rescue. In particular, it is important with such youngsters to emphasize the building of trust and warmth between them and their teachers; steadiness and consistency are invaluable elements of such trust building. The enhancement of self-esteem is also important to stress. *Referral for psychological counseling for the child is recommended.*

Above all, the teacher should make every effort to retain the child in school; to maintain consistent, regular contact with the other people working with the family; and to be as patient and caring with both the child and the family as possible.

SUMMARY

Sensible caution and referral to an expert are advisable under some circumstances, but teachers can offer a lot of help and can work with families in many ways to bring about a happier life for the children in their care. In this process, it is first necessary to overcome various problems that make communication between families and teachers difficult. One of the most effective things teachers can do is make it clear to the family that they have the welfare of the child at heart and that they want to join with the family to help the child. Teachers can also take care to be available when the parent wants to talk, and they can provide the opportunity for many easygoing, casual contacts.

Once the lines of communication are open, teachers can offer help by serving as friendly listeners who assist the family in assessing the nature of

any difficulties and in proposing alternatives until they find the one best suited for family and child. Teachers who assume this guidance function offer families what they need the most: an accepting attitude, an open ear, and a warm heart.

Questions and Activities

1. In what ways can teachers make the child care center or school "family-friendly"? List some specific actions you would take to encourage family involvement and communication.
2. Have the class divide into pairs. One person in each pair should select a problem or difficulty to discuss while the other person listens. Before making any other reply, the listener must first restate in his or her own words what the speaker is saying; that is, the listener's primary task is to be open to the feelings and import of the communication. Then shift roles and have the speaker practice this sort of listening and responding.

Diversity Questions

1. What types of families can early childhood teachers expect to work with? Think of a family structure that is different from your own, and list three ways in which you can convey to the family and the child that they are welcome in your program.
2. Select children in your group who appear to require special diagnostic help of some kind. List the reasons for your conclusion that they need help. With another student, practice how you might broach the subject of referral with the family. It is helpful to practice with one "parent" who is resistant, one who is overly agreeable, and one who is obviously upset about your suggestion.

Predicament

1. You are now head teacher in a class of 3-year-olds. One afternoon a mother is half an hour late picking up her child. When you ask why she is late, she snarls, "None of your damn business," and yanks her child out the door. How would you handle this situation?

Self-Check Questions for Review

Content-Related Questions

1. Give some practical examples of ways that teachers can show families that they really care about their children.
2. List and describe the three-part process involved in dealing with an angry complaint.
3. What do families really need in a conference?
4. List some practical pointers for conducting a successful conference.
5. Why is it important to get families involved in their child's program?
6. How might the needs of families who have their infant in child care be different from the needs of families of older children?

Integrative Questions

1. Britney, a 6-year-old girl in your group, has taken to pinching children, grabbing materials, and displaying other destructive behaviors. You are quite concerned and ask her parents whether they could come to a conference with you. Give three examples of what you would say to these parents during the conference that would blame them for their child's behavior. Be sure to use actual quotations.
2. Now that Britney's parents are really mad at you, suggest an angry sentence or two they might say in reply. Then, for each of the sentences, phrase a response that would describe their feelings back to them.
3. Now suggest some approaches you could use instead that would *not* blame Britney's parents for her behavior.

Reference for Further Reading

Baker, A. C., & Manfredi/Petitt, L. A. (2004). *Relationships, the heart of quality care: Creating community among adults in early care settings*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This is a very comprehensive guide to working with adults.

Related Organizations and Online Resources

Childhelp, National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-4-A-CHILD. Information and resources are available online at childhelp.org.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF). Since 1973, CDF has worked toward reducing the numbers of neglected, sick, uneducated, and poor children in the United States. Many resources to support families can be found at childrensdefense.org.

Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative. Publications and information for the worldwide early childhood and parenting communities can be found at ecap.crc.illinois.edu/.

National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). For over three decades, the NBCDI has worked to build family support services. Information is available at nbcdi.org.

National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF). The center is dedicated to research and practice that expand the knowledge base on father involvement and family development. Information can be found at ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.