Changes are sweeping across the early childhood landscape, transforming our profession before our eyes! These changes create exciting possibilities for you and all early childhood professionals. We discuss these changes in every chapter of *Early Childhood Education Today*, which is designed to keep you current and on the cutting edge of early childhood teaching practice.

Changes in early childhood education and development bring both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities are endless for you to participate in the ongoing re-creation of the early childhood profession. In fact, creating and re-creating the early childhood profession is one of your constant professional roles. This means you have to create and constantly re-create *yourself* as an early childhood professional. *Early Childhood Education Today* helps you achieve this professional goal. The challenges involved in reforming the profession include collaboration, hard work, and constant dedication to achieving high-quality education for *all* children. I hope you will take full advantage of these opportunities to help all children learn the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school and life. I believe how you and I respond to the opportunities we have in front of us today will determine the future of early childhood education. This text helps you learn what it takes to understand and teach young children and how to provide them the support they and their families need and deserve.

**NEW TO THIS EDITION**

Of the many changes in the new edition, I am perhaps most excited to introduce you to a new version of *Early Childhood Education Today*—the new eText. The eText is an affordable, interactive version of the print text that includes many new and exciting features in every chapter, such as chapter-opening links to specific NAEYC standards that correlate with the chapter, interactive Observe and Reflect exercises that provide video illustrations of chapter content, interactive Reflect and Apply exercises that prompt you to apply what you’ve just read by suggesting a solution for a challenging situation typically encountered in early childhood settings, and interactive Check Your Understanding features that help you determine whether you understand fundamental concepts covered in the chapter or need a review. (See the Text Features section for additional new features.)

To learn more about the enhanced Pearson eText, go to www.pearsonhighered.com/etextbooks.

In addition to the new eText, in the thirteenth edition, you can expect the following:

- Increased focus on *practical and applicable content*, which provides you with instructional practices you can take into the classroom. Every chapter specifically outlines and identifies through *Implications for Teaching* headings what teachers can do in their classrooms to help children learn and grow.
- Seven new *Voice from the Field* and *Voice from the Field: Competency Builder* features.
- A refocused emphasis on the *professional goals and responsibilities* of early childhood teachers today. Every chapter focuses on the *contemporary societal and educational issues* that influence what teachers teach and how they teach and the professional practices teachers need to be successful.
• An expanded discussion of teaching with standards, including state standards, Common Core State Standards, and professional organization standards. Teaching today is truly standard-based, and this new edition provides you with an understanding of how important standards are in today’s classroom.
• An increased emphasis on how teachers can incorporate culturally appropriate and respectful practices into their teaching and learning.
• An expanded discussion of the integration of technology through teaching and learning. This expanded discussion is demonstrated by more examples of how teachers use technology to teach and by a new 5E lesson plan specifically designed around teaching with technology.
• An expanded discussion with many examples of the teacher’s role in observation and assessment of children’s learning and how to use observation and assessment to enhance instructional practices.
• New Ethical Dilemmas at the end of the chapters which involve you in issues and dilemmas from contemporary classrooms.
YOU AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
What Does It Mean to Be a Professional?

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Discuss how the early childhood profession is changing.
2. Explain who an early childhood professional is.
3. List the six standards for being an early childhood education (ECE) professional.
4. Explain how to apply developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) to your professional practice.
5. Describe how you can prepare for a career in early childhood education.
6. Explain what a philosophy of education is and how you can develop your philosophy and apply it in your professional practice.
7. Explain your understanding of what roles are expected of you as an inclusive early childhood professional.
EVER since she was in high school, Renee Comacho wanted to teach young children. Not just any children, but children with disabilities. During her junior year, Renee joined a summer volunteer intern program at her local child care center that had five children with disabilities. She really enjoyed working with them! That experience got her hooked on early childhood special education! Today, Renee teaches K–3 in a public early childhood center of two hundred children that includes children with many kinds of disabilities. Renee is working on her master’s degree and wants to earn National Board Certification as an exceptional needs specialist. Renee works with teams of teachers and they are always learning how to accommodate lessons and activities to assure that they are meeting the needs of all children—especially those with disabilities. At the beginning of this school year, they all participated in training about how to accommodate the curriculum and classroom environments to support learning. They also learned how to involve families of children with disabilities. Renee and her colleagues have high expectations for all the children, so they want to make sure they do the best they can for them. As you can tell, Renee is excited about teaching and wants the best for her children. I hope you feel the same way!

**CHANGES IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSION**

This is a wonderful time to be a member of the early childhood education profession. The field of **early childhood education**, which includes knowledge of how children from birth to age eight grow, develop, and learn, has changed more in the last ten years than in the previous fifty years, and more changes are on the way! Why is early childhood education undergoing dramatic transformation and reform?

**CHANGES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.** First, there is a tremendous increase in scientific knowledge about how young children grow, develop, and learn. This new knowledge helps parents and teachers view young children as being extremely capable and naturally eager to learn at very young ages. Second, all across the United States, educators have developed research-based programs and curricula that enable children to learn literally from the beginning of life. Third, influential research, such as the HighScope Perry Preschool Project, validates the fact that high-quality education in the early years has positive and lasting benefits for children throughout their lives. Additional research from the Abecedarian Project and the Chicago Parent-Child Centers (CPCs) demonstrate the long- and short-term benefits of quality early education and child care, particularly for children who come from low-income families. The way children are reared and educated in the early formative years makes a significant difference in the way they develop and learn. When families, teachers, and other caring adults get it right from the start of children’s lives, all of society reaps big dividends. Fourth, more than 75 percent of all four-year-olds attend some kind of preschool program, and more than 1.3 million children attend state-funded preschool education. The demand for teachers for these children, as well as ongoing public and professional interest, will continue to focus attention on the early years and the importance they play in lifelong education. Finally, politicians are rediscovering young children. During the Great Recession of 2007–2010 and the years following, politicians either eliminated or reduced funding for preschool programs. Now, thanks in part to President Obama’s call for universal preschool in his 2013 State
of the Union Address, all seems to be changing, with more states joining the federal
government in allocating more funding for preschools.

As a result of all these changes, the field of early childhood education is entering
a new era, which requires well-educated early childhood professionals who are up-to-
date on current methods, who are willing to develop new and improved programs for
children and families, and who will advocate for best practices for all young children.
Ongoing change and how you can respond to it is one of the themes of the early child-
hood profession and this book.

WHO IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL?

Like Renee, you are preparing to be a highly qualified and effective early childhood
professional, who teaches children from birth to age eight. You are going to work with
families and the community to bring high-quality education and services to all chil-
dren. How would you explain the term early childhood professional to others? What
does professional mean?

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

You are preparing to be an early childhood professional—that is, a person who
successfully teaches all children (birth to age eight), promotes high personal and
professional standards, and continually expands your skills and knowledge. You will
teach all children and develop supportive relationships with them to help ensure that
each child can achieve and be successful. For example, National Teacher of the Year
Rebecca Mielwoki promotes high-quality teaching based on her belief that students
learn best when they have the most enthusiastic, engaged teachers possible.4

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

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

THE SIX STANDARDS OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Being a professional goes beyond academic degrees and experiences. High-quality
professionalism in early childhood education has six integrated standards, all of which
are important and necessary dimensions of your professional experience. These are
located at the beginning of each chapter. Figure 1.1, “The Six NAEYC Standards for
Early Childhood Professional Practice,” shows how each of these standards plays a
powerful role in determining who and what a professional is and how professionals
implement practice in early childhood classrooms. Let’s review each of these standards
and see how you can apply them to your professional practice. In the video, George S.
Morrison, EdD, Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of North
Texas, discusses the NAEYC Professional Development Standards. Professor Morrison
clearly identifies how and why these standards are important for your professional de-
velopment. As you observe, make sure that you clearly understand each standard and
how you can begin to apply them to your ongoing professional development.
NAEYC Standard 1
Promotes child development and learning

NAEYC Standard 2
Builds family and community relationships

NAEYC Standard 3
Observes, documents, and assesses to support young children and families

NAEYC Standard 4
Uses developmentally effective approaches to connect with children and families

NAEYC Standard 5
Uses content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum

NAEYC Standard 6
Identifies with and acts as an early childhood professional

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**FIGURE 1.1** | Six NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs

These standards of professional preparation provide guidelines for what you should know and be able to do in your lifelong career as an early childhood professional.


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**STANDARD 1: PROMOTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING**

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT.** As an early childhood professional you will need to understand child development and learning and how to promote them. *Child development* is the stages of physical, social, mental, and linguistic growth that occur from birth through age eight. Learning how to do this includes knowledge and understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs and the multiple influences on children’s development and learning.

Knowledge of child development is fundamental for all early childhood educators regardless of their roles or the ages of the children they teach. It enables an educator to confidently implement developmentally appropriate practices with all children. All early childhood professionals “base their practice on sound knowledge and understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs. This foundation encompasses multiple, interrelated areas of children’s development and learning—including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, and aesthetic domains; play, activity, and...
learning processes; and motivation to learn to use their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning.5

Teacher of the Year Tina Repetti-Renzullo believes that teaching should take on many forms to meet the unique needs and learning styles of each individual. She believes that this is not an easy task, but it is the core of her responsibility as a teacher. Her classroom is a lively space where students are encouraged to access the content by employing their bodies and brains. In teaching students the letters and sounds of the alphabet, Tina uses tactile manipulatives, poetry, visual cues, song, dance, puppetry, and home language as much as possible in order to engage their cognitive processes.6

MULTIPLE INFLUENCES AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT. Young children are shaped by multiple influences that determine their life outcomes:

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

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

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

- **Children’s and families’ socioeconomic conditions.** Children in poverty represent 24 percent of the total population.7 Research clearly shows that children in poverty do not do well in school and life. This means that you will teach children in poverty, and as a professional you will be responsible for their learning, growth, and development.

- **Children with disabilities.** It is estimated that 13 percent of all children in public schools have a disability of some kind.8 There is every reason to believe that this number will increase as methods for diagnoses increase. Children come to child care, preschool, and grades K–3 with many physical, behavioral, and learning disabilities. As an early childhood professional, you will care for and educate children with physical, behavioral, and learning disabilities.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SPECIAL EDUCATION AND YOU

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES. As more children with disabilities are included in the regular classroom, early childhood and special education are blending and integrating. For example, kindergarten teacher Julie Sanders has in her classroom a child with autism and a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As a result, she applies knowledge of typical and atypical child development. As a teacher of young children, you will more than likely have at least one child with a disability in your classroom. Consequently, it is important that you, like Julie, know the developmental characteristics of children with disabilities as well as typically developing children.

Throughout this text, you will find specific ideas and skills for accommodating children with disabilities.
Just as the NAEYC has standards for professional development, so too does the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children. These professional standards guide the preparation of teachers who are preparing to be early childhood special education teachers. These standards apply to you for two reasons: First, you will be teaching in an inclusive classroom, a regular classroom in which children with disabilities are included. The inclusive classroom is the “new normal” for teachers today. Second, you must know typical and atypical child growth and development and how to provide developmentally appropriate teaching and learning for children with disabilities in your classroom. You can access DEC’s professional standards at the DEC website.

Knowledge of individual children, combined with knowledge of child growth and development, enables you to provide care and education that is developmentally appropriate for each child. Developmentally Appropriate Practice, or DAP, means basing your teaching on how children grow and develop, and DAP is the recommended teaching practice of the early childhood profession. You can access the NAEYC’s Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs at the NAEYC website.

Melanie Park, the 2012 Indiana Teacher of the Year, connects with each of her students individually in order to motivate them to learn and to differentiate instruction. She helps students set reading goals, create data portfolios, and chart their own reading growth. Her superintendent believes that Melanie views herself as an academic trainer whose primary mission is to relate, motivate, and differentiate instruction for her students. She has an exceptional ability to achieve this mission by using her life experiences and learned abilities as a professional educator to connect with the learning needs of her students.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE APPROACHES. Knowledge of child development provides the foundation for you to conduct developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). With your understanding of child development you will be able to select essential curricula and instructional approaches with confidence. All early childhood professionals use their understanding of child development as the foundation for their work with young children.

Teachers such as Steven Hokama, from Mililani-Ike Elementary School in Hawaii, understand that they must teach the whole child. Hokama believes that every student can learn, should experience success, and have fun as he develops the “whole” child—physically, mentally, and socially. In teaching physical education, Hokama has found ways to encourage cognitive and emotional development and teamwork while students improve motor skills and physical endurance.

We discuss DAP in more detail throughout this book. These ideas and specific strategies for implementing DAP serve as your road map for teaching. As you read about DAP suggestions, consider how you can begin now to apply them in your professional practice.

Culturally Appropriate Practice. Developmentally and culturally responsive practice (DCRP) includes being sensitive to and responding to children’s cultural and ethnic backgrounds and needs. The United States is a nation of diverse people, and this diversity will increase. Children in every early childhood program represent this diversity. When children enter schools and programs, they do not leave their uniqueness, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, and race at the classroom door. Children bring themselves and their backgrounds to early childhood programs. As part of your professional practice you will embrace, value, and incorporate culturally appropriate practice into your teaching. Learning how to teach children of all cultures is an important part of your professional role.
Critical goals for developing cultural identity include developing in children an individual cultural identity that involves learning about the self—“who am I?” They also involve learning about the culture of which the child is a part and how the child relates to and functions in that culture. For this reason, you should provide activities and an environmental context in which children can learn about their cultures, identify with them, and feel comfortable about being a part of them.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING**

- **Evaluate your classroom environment and instructional materials to determine if they are appropriate for culturally appropriate practice.** Make sure your books, fiction and nonfiction, represent children of all races and cultures. In my visits to early childhood classrooms, I observe many that are “cluttered,” meaning they contain too many materials that do not contribute to a multicultural learning environment. Include photos and representations from all cultures in your classroom.
- **Redesign your classroom.** For example, you may decide to add a literacy center that encourages children to read and write about multicultural themes. Remember that children need the time, opportunity, and materials required to read and write about a wide range of multicultural topics. Make sure you provide children with books relating to gender, culture, and ethnic themes.
- **Evaluate your current curriculum and approaches to diversity.** Review your curriculum to see how it is supporting multicultural approaches. Learning experiences should be relevant to your students, their community, and their families’ cultures. When you are diversifying your curriculum, consider two categories: how you teach and what you teach.
- **Make sure all children are accepted and valued.** For example, develop plans for ensuring that children of all cultures and genders are included in play groups and activities. Anne Borys, a physical therapist from Drexel University, suggests that teachers promote disability awareness and acceptance in childhood by having a “disability for a day” in your classroom. Have children wear mittens and attempt to button their shirt, play with play dough with rubber bands on fingers, and put Vaseline on plastic glasses to help your inclusive classroom gain awareness and understanding of children who have disabilities.11
- **Reflect on your interaction with all children.** You may unknowingly give more attention to boys than to girls. Also, you may overlook some important environmental accommodations that can support the learning of children with disabilities. How do you interact with children of different cultures? With children who have disabilities?
- **Include multicultural activities in your lesson plans.** Intentional planning helps ensure that you include a full range of antibias activities in your program. Intentional multicultural planning also helps you integrate multicultural activities into your curriculum for meeting national, state, and local learning standards.
- **Work with families to incorporate your multicultural curriculum.** Remember, families are valuable resources in helping you achieve your goals. One way to connect with parents is to send home a survey to learn more about your students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that you can incorporate them into your classroom’s instructional activities.
Implementing a multicultural education will not be easy and will require a lot of hard work and effort on your part. However, this is what teaching and being a professional is about. You owe it to yourself, your children, and the profession to conduct programs that enable all children to live and learn in them.

**KNOWLEDGE OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN.** Knowledge and understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs enables you to develop and implement meaningful learning experiences that promote learning for all children. Say, for example, you were a beginning teacher with several English language learners or ELLs (also referred to as Dual Language Learners or DLLs) in your class. You would want to know how ELLs learn best and how to teach them so they learn at high levels. Effective pedagogical approaches include using developmentally appropriate practices, selecting and using culturally appropriate learning materials, promoting children’s oral language and communication, supporting child-initiated learning, guiding children’s learning and behavior, promoting responsive relationships, establishing and using learning centers, using play as a foundation for children’s learning, and using technology as a teaching and learning tool. These are all topics you will want to study and reflect on as you prepare to be an early childhood professional.

The featured Voice from the Field that follows, “Tools for Teaching Tolerance to Young Children,” shares some important suggestions to guide you in making sure your professional practice is multicultural. This Voice from the Field is also a Competency Builder. Competency Builders are features designed to help you increase your teaching competence and performance in specific professional areas. By completing the Competency Builder activities, you enhance your professional development and contribute to your qualifications as a high-quality and highly effective teacher.

**CREATING HEALTHY, RESPECTFUL, SUPPORTIVE, AND CHALLENGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.** Children are healthier, happier, and more achievement oriented when they are cared for and taught in enriched environments. To attain this goal for all children, provide them with environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging.

- **Healthy environments:** Provide for children’s physical and psychological health, safety, and sense of security. For example, the Austin Eco School in Austin, Texas, creates an environment for its students where they can learn and play in an environment that is free from chemical toxins typically found in cleansers, paint, and flooring.12

  More and more, parents look for child care centers and schools that make efforts to be environmentally safe and friendly. Many early childhood programs use eco-friendly diapers, nontoxic paints and pest control, and organic baby foods.13

- **Respectful environments:** Show respect for each individual child and for the child’s culture, home language, individual abilities or disabilities, family context, and community. Meredith Abbott, a teacher of the year, believes that outstanding teachers provide a structured, safe environment where students feel they can experiment without the threat of ridicule or disappointment. She also believes that students feel safest when they can trust their teacher. Therefore, she takes the time to get to know students by building lessons that allow them to share openly and freely. The secret to cracking even the hardest nut is to listen—truly listen—when they open up and share. Meredith empathizes with students, builds trust, and tackles any obstacle they face with fierce tenacity.14

  Santos Ramirez, a first grader with ataxic cerebral palsy, uses a DynaVox Vmax, an augmentative and alternative communication device that helps children with speech and learning challenges communicate. Santos is in an inclusive classroom with other first graders and enjoys physical education and recess along with his classmates.
One of the joys of teaching young children is being surrounded by people full of wonder and who are open to possibility. One important job of a teacher of young children is to keep alive that sense of awe and openness—that spirit of tolerance—to foster the respect for diversity and the awareness of interdependence that will be requisite skills in their twenty-first-century lives. Here are some tools to help you teach tolerance in the early childhood classroom:

**STEP 1 Know Yourself**

Sounds simple, right? Not always! Remember, you are the adult in the classroom and the children look to you for guidance—let them be guided by someone who has learned to guide him- or herself! Teaching tolerance means facilitating a respect for differences, so understand how your family, your community, and its culture and history are different from and/or similar to the experiences of other children, families, and communities in the United States and across the globe. Become your own subject, examine your own biases and privileges, explore your own experiences of the educational system, and allow it all to guide you to a deeper understanding of and respect for yourself so that you can have a deeper respect for your children.

**STEP 2 Know Your Students and Their Families**

You can’t teach tolerance (or anything else!) to those you don’t know! Take the time necessary to learn as much as you can about your students. This includes understanding the histories of the communities from which your students come as well as their home cultures, languages, and values. Creating an authentic connection to a child’s family is crucial when working with young children, especially when there are cultural differences between teacher and family. Offer a home visit, learn a few pleasantries in the languages spoken by your students’ families, go to the afterschool programs and community centers in the neighborhoods of your students. Demonstrate through action that you have the will to learn about how to be the best teacher you can be for your students.

**STEP 3 Get Students Talking**

When teachers provide children with opportunities to plan, discuss, investigate, create, and play with one another, ignorance and fear are uprooted and in their place are cultivated tolerance and respect. The routines teachers provide in their classrooms create the framework within which children feel safe to venture beyond their own community and get to know others. Ensure that children have multiple opportunities to authentically engage with one another through interaction protocols such as *Give One Get One* (where children share ideas with several self-selected partners) as well as with partners to whom they are appointed through the use of a partner-of-the-day rotation.
In this way, you establish routines of consistent interaction that build relationship and a genuine sense of community in your classroom.

**STEP 4**

**Remember—Not Better, Not Worse—Just Different**

Even our youngest students are aware of human diversity. Children are keen observers of the differences that exist between themselves and their classmates as well as between themselves and you. So, discuss those insights, being certain to frame them as no more or no less than what they are: differences. What better way to facilitate a respect for diversity and an understanding of differences than through high-quality, culturally relevant children’s literature! Thoughtfully chosen books provide opportunities to challenge stereotypes; moreover, stories selected with intentionality expand students’ knowledge of—or simply introduce them to—the continents and cultures from which their own communities (and those of their classmates) are derived. Great books become open doors through which you and your students can venture into a realm of rich discussions about the interconnectedness of the human experience—an experience that teachers must help students see as one that simply varies from place to place.

**STEP 5**

**Create a Community Circle**

Can young children really understand what a community is? When they become involved in building their classroom community and in maintaining its culture, the answer is, “Yes, without a doubt!” Also “without a doubt” is why students need to understand community—to foster the interdependence and respect for diverse perspectives that is critical to responsible citizenship. Create a classroom ritual of a community circle, a space in which children sit facing one another, a space wherein you, the teacher, become an equal participant in constructing this interdependence. Starting each day in community circle, greeting one another by name using the languages spoken at home, allowing a “student of the day” to read a daily affirmation that the community repeats and then briefly discusses are powerful ways to build trust, relationship, and commitment to one another.

*Source: Contributed by Robert Sautter, kindergarten teacher at Leonard R. Flynn Elementary, San Francisco, California, and recipient of the Teaching Tolerance Award for Excellence in Culturally Responsive Teaching.*

with his friends. Santos’s teacher, Lisa Hamilton, was initially nervous about having Santos in her class. However, Lisa says Santos won everyone over. He’s a regular kid trapped in a body that won’t work the way he wants it to. He is capable of the first grade curriculum. He is very intelligent.15

**• Supportive environments:** Believe each child can learn, and help children understand and make meaning of their experiences. Teachers at Discovery Elementary School in Idaho, encourage and support their students by offering a program that pairs students who have autism with typically developing children. The goal of the program is to “ease autistic students into the traditional classroom and bring the regular school experience to students who spend most of their day in the autistic classroom,” says Discovery Principal Ken Marlowe.16 English language learners are another group that benefit from supportive environments. Pairing ELLs with English-speaking “buddies,” constantly recognizing students’ abilities and accomplishments; and building positive relationships with ELLs are ways to support students academically and socially.

**• Challenging environments:** Provide achievable and “stretching” experiences for all children. Environments and experiences should provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that challenge them about how to use play materials in different ways, to solve their own problems and negotiate with others, and to use tools and materials in different ways. A woodworking area for preschoolers would be a good example of this. Play time, especially outdoor play time on well-designed and well-maintained equipment, enables a child to challenge and develop his or her physical abilities and skills.

**supportive environments**

Those environments in which professionals believe each child can learn, and that help children understand and make meaning of their experiences.

**challenging environments**

Those environments that provide achievable and “stretching” experiences for all children.


**STANDARD 2: BUILDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Families are an important part of children’s lives. Creating a collaborative relationship with your students’ families and the community makes sense in order to give your students the best opportunity to succeed. To do this, you need to know about and be respectful of children’s families and the communities in which they live.

**RESPECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.** Saying that you are respectful of children and families is one thing; putting respect into practice means you will use your skills and knowledge of child development and family involvement to make respectfulness a reality.

**Implications for Teaching** Here are some things you can do to demonstrate your respect for children and their families:

- **Plan cooking and other activities in collaboration with parents.** Inquire about restricted diets to determine acceptable foods and recipes so all children can participate; have parents advise you about appropriate cultural activities; and ask children what cultural practices they would like to include in classroom activities.
- **Validate children’s home languages by learning words and teaching them to the other children.** For example, when counting the days on the calendar, you can count in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and so on.¹⁷
- **Keep expectations clear between your students and their families.** For example, at the beginning of the school year, kindergarten teacher Rebecca Allen at Wood River Elementary School in Wood River, Nebraska, sends out a newsletter titled the “ABC’s of Kindergarten” for parents, which includes information such as attendance, behavior, and classroom expectations, as well as content areas taught and roles of the parent in the classroom. She sends regular newsletters to parents, all of which are on her website for families to download online.¹⁸
- **Isabel Martinez,** first grade bilingual teacher and teacher of the year, supports parents by giving them strategies for helping children with their homework, encourages parents to stay in contact with her, and makes home visits when needed. She believes her job is not just to teach children academics, but to teach citizenship as well. She teaches citizenship and character traits, striving to help each child learn to share the concern for the well-being and dignity of others. Isabel believes children must learn to demonstrate loyalty and pride toward their country. Isabel teaches her children to be responsible, respectful, courteous, and honest toward others with whom we share our values and different ways of life.¹⁹

Learn about families’ child-rearing practices and how they handle routines relating to toileting, behavioral problems, and so on. Learning how to build family relationships is an important part of your professional development. Respectful and reciprocal relationships with parents and families empower them to be involved in their children’s educations.

**STANDARD 3: OBSERVING, DOCUMENTING, AND ASSESSING TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

One of your most important responsibilities as an early childhood professional will be to observe, document, and assess children’s learning. The outcomes of **assessment**, the cognitive process of collecting information about children’s development, learning,
behavior, academic progress, need for special services, and achievement in order to make decisions, will guide you and will provide you abundant information to share with parents and families. Consider assessment as a three-way process, as shown in Figure 1.2.

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

Through assessment, observation, and documentation practices, you can provide accommodations for children with disabilities and also involve parents in the process. For example, first grade teacher Addie Hare asks parents to fill out a short survey about their children’s interests and learning needs. Parents know their children best, and you can learn a lot when you listen to what they have to say. Ask parents what their children like to do outside of school, special accommodations a child may need, and how they would like to be involved. Finish your survey with an open-ended question such as, “Is there anything else you would like me to know?” This often yields helpful information that might not emerge from previous questions.

**STANDARD 4: USING DEVELOPMENTALLY EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO CONNECT WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

As an early childhood professional, you will integrate your understanding of and relationships with children and families; your understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning; and your knowledge of content areas to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive, developmentally appropriate learning for all children. To be a professional in this area, you will also demonstrate positive relationships with children and families. All of education is about relationships: how you relate to your colleagues, how you relate to parents and other family members, and
responsive relationships
The relationship that exists between yourself, children, and their families in which you are responsive to their needs and interests of children and their families.

how you relate to children. In responsive relationships, you are responsive to the needs and interests of children and their families.

**STANDARD 5: USING CONTENT KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD MEANING CURRICULUM**

Research shows that students benefit when teachers develop a more in-depth understanding of content areas, of effective means of gathering and using formative assessment data, and of how to differentiate instruction to address needs.\(^{21}\)

**CONTENT AREAS.** Content areas are the basis for children's learning to read, write, learn mathematics and science, and be successful in school and life. Consequently, early childhood professionals understand the importance of each content area in children's development and learning, demonstrate the essential knowledge and skills needed to provide appropriate environments that support learning in each content area, and demonstrate basic knowledge of the research base underlying each content area.\(^{22}\)

The content areas in early childhood are as follows:

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

**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM).** Today there is a growing emphasis on incorporating engineering and technology content in the school curriculum beginning in preschool. You will hear a lot about STEM throughout your teaching preparation and career. For example, Michelle Shearer, a National Teacher of the Year, is an advocate for STEM education for all K–12 students and successfully reaches those who have been traditionally underrepresented in scientific fields, including students with special needs and those from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Her teaching methods rely heavily on real-life applications of scientific concepts.\(^{23}\)

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

**Content Knowledge.** The knowledge that comes from content areas is known as *content knowledge*. Teachers must understand the content they teach (e.g., math, science, social studies) and what constitutes the essential knowledge and skills of each content area. It is for this reason that state standards are important and helpful; you will want to be familiar with your state standards for each subject and grade level you teach, as well as the state’s Common Core State Standards for reading and math.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** In addition to knowing content, teachers also must know how to teach students so they learn content knowledge. This is called *pedagogical content knowledge*, which is knowing how to teach children so the content knowledge is accessible to them. This means that you must be able to provide appropriate examples and use appropriate strategies to illustrate the content. In addition, you must be able to identify the interests and learning needs of young children so that you can make content knowledge accessible to them. For example, first grade teacher Sarah Becker created a Blooming Earth Garden, an outdoor classroom that provides an exciting hands-on learning experience across all grade levels and covers several school curriculum areas such as science, writing, math, and art. Students study the importance of Illinois prairies, documenting and photographing, and by the end of the year are able to identify the differences between living and nonliving things and have an increased understanding of plant and animal growth.

Second grade students at Robert E. Clow Elementary School in Naperville, Illinois, learn social studies by building a model community resembling their city out of cardboard and shoe boxes. The students learn how to use map grids and keys and use the telephone book to look up addresses and descriptions of actual landmarks in Naperville, such as the town hall, stores, and roads.

**Pedagogical Knowledge.** A third type of knowledge, general *pedagogical knowledge*, involves how to effectively teach and facilitate learning regardless of the content area. This knowledge involves considering school, family, community contexts, and children’s prior experiences to develop meaningful learning experiences. It also involves reflecting on teaching practice and includes a variety of ideas, methods, and technologies to help each child learn. For example, second grade teacher Lauren Smith has her children use iPads for writing and illustrating stories. Students publish their work on a student-created website that allows them to share their writing with students from all over the world. Publishing their writing facilitates discussions across many contexts and content areas and creates a meaningful learning experience for her students.

**Knowledge of Learners and Learning.** Finally, high-quality teachers know and understand the students they teach. This is called *knowledge of learners and learning*. Third grade teacher Sarah Hennessey, a North Carolina Teacher of the Year, is constantly aware that words, deeds, and actions create memories in her students’ minds. She knows firsthand how powerful a teacher’s influence and example are on children.

Robert Stephenson, third grade teacher and Michigan Teacher of the Year, knows it is important to treat each child with respect and dignity, to accept each child with understanding, and to have faith in his or her abilities. He also wants to help students learn to value themselves, value others, and develop a love and enthusiasm for learning. He believes in connecting with individual children and challenging them to reach their highest potential.
**Collaborative Planning.** Today's teachers engage in collaborative planning. They meet collaboratively in grade level teams and across grade level teams in order to examine student data and to plan and develop instructional strategies. Collaborative teams also incorporate and align their curricula with local and state standards and state Common Core State Standards.

**Reflective Practice.** Building a meaningful curriculum for young children also involves reflective practice. Reflective practice helps you think about how children learn and enables you to make decisions about how best to support their development and learning. Thinking about learning and understanding how children learn makes it easier for you to improve your teaching effectiveness, student learning, and professional satisfaction. In addition, thinking about learning and thinking about teaching are part of your reflective practice. Reflective practice involves deliberate and careful consideration about the children you teach, the theories on which you base your teaching, how you teach, what children learn, and how you will teach in the future. Although solitary reflection is useful, the power of reflective practice is more fully realized when you engage in such practice with your mentor teacher in collaborative planning. The reflective teacher is a thoughtful teacher. Reflective practice involves the three steps shown in Figure 1.3.

**Check Your Understanding: Standard 5**

- I am self-reflective and thoughtful about my teaching.
- I assess the success of my students.
- I report students' achievements to parents in appropriate ways that parents understand.
- I provide feedback to my students to help them learn.
- I make decisions about what I will teach based on Common Core State Standards, as well as state and local standards.
- I determine how the students learn best—whole group, small group, collaborating with each other, etc.
- I scaffold instruction through differentiation and accommodation.
- I decide what resources I will need to teach.
- I use students' prior knowledge to gain their interest and give them a focus.
- I constantly observe and assess my students.
- I respond to my students' needs.
- I introduce new concepts and information.
- I motivate and challenge my students to pursue their own learning.

**Figure 1.3** | The Cycle of Reflective Practice: Thinking, Planning, and Deciding
STANDARD 6: BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL

Early childhood professionals conduct themselves as professionals and identify with their profession. When you identify with and are involved in your profession, you can proudly proclaim that you are a teacher of young children. Being a professional means that you (1) know about and engage in ethical practice; (2) engage in continuous lifelong learning and professional development; (3) collaborate with colleagues, parents, families, and community partners; (4) engage in reflective practice; and (5) advocate on behalf of children, families, and the profession. These competencies represent the heart and soul of professional practice.

CONTINUOUS AND LIFELONG PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES. A professional is never a “finished” product; you are always involved in professional development, a process of studying, learning, changing, and becoming more professional. Professional development involves participation in training and education beyond the minimum needed for your current position. You will also want to consider your career objectives and the qualifications you might need for positions of increasing responsibility. Today, more teachers are also getting certified in special education and teaching ELLs. In fact, many students complete these certifications before they graduate.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES. As previously discussed, you, your colleagues, and your administrators will engage in collaborative planning in which you develop curricula and instructional processes. This process is often accomplished through a professional learning community (PLC), a team of early childhood professionals working collaboratively to improve teaching and learning. Professional learning communities support a school culture that recognizes and capitalizes on the collective strengths and talents of the staff. They are designed to increase student achievement by creating a school culture focused on learning.

For example, all teachers in Northfield Public School District in Northfield, Maine, participate in weekly PLC meetings with colleagues who share the same students and/or subject matter. They use their district curriculum and all existing student data to determine: what knowledge and skills they expect students to learn, how they will know if students meet the desired objectives, how they will respond when students have difficulty achieving the desired objectives and when students have already met the desired objectives, and how they can use student data and work samples to better inform their practice and communicate with parents.

Peer Coaching. I’ll bet all of you had experience with coaches—Little League, soccer, softball, or whatever other sport you participated in. Coaches provide invaluable assistance and support. They help guide, direct, model, and encourage others to use their talents and abilities. Just as coaches play an important role in the field of sports, coaches also play an important role in teaching and learning. Peer coaching is a process whereby teachers agree to learn from each other through observation, interaction, and discussions. In peer coaching, teachers work in pairs with each other to observe and identify areas in which they would like to improve. Peer coaching is powerful and enables you to grow and develop as you collaborate with your colleagues.

Mentoring. Mentoring is the process in which an experienced and highly qualified teacher works with a novice or beginning teacher to help the new teacher be successful. More than likely, as a beginning teacher, you will be assigned to a mentor teacher who will act as a leader, guide, sponsor, and role model for you. Generally, the mentor teacher works with the new early childhood professional during the first year of teaching.
Just in Time Professional Development. Even though some professional development occurs grade-wide and school-wide, often teachers need help implementing instructional strategies in their classrooms. Increasing numbers of school districts provide “just in time,” teacher-specific staff development. For example, when first-year teacher Ashley Higgins had difficulty implementing guided reading in her first grade classroom, instructional specialist Amanda Murphy worked with Ashley in her classroom to develop the skills to implement guided reading.

ENGAGING IN ETHICAL PRACTICE. Ethical conduct—the exercise of responsible behavior with children, families, colleagues, and community and society—enables you to engage confidently in exemplary professional practice. The profession of early childhood education has a set of ethical standards to guide your thinking and behavior. NAEYC has developed the Code of Ethical Conduct and a Statement of Commitment, which can be reviewed by going to the NAEYC website.

You can begin now to incorporate professional ethical practices into your interactions with children and colleagues. To stimulate your thinking, the Activities for Professional Development section at the end of this and every chapter includes an ethical dilemma.

In each case, the ethical dilemma is a situation that a teacher, groups of teachers, and administrators face in making decisions when there is not always an easy or “right” answer.

As you reflect on and respond to the dilemmas, use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct as a valuable guide and resource.

COLLABORATING WITH PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS. Part of becoming a professional, involves gaining experience with parents, families, and the community. These experiences allow you to gain a better understanding of the complex characteristics of families and communities as well as to begin to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families. Parents, families, and the community are essential partners in the process of schooling. Knowing how to collaborate effectively with these key partners will serve you well throughout your career.

ADVOCACY. Advocacy is the act of pleading the issues impacting children and families to the profession and the public and engaging in strategies designed to improve the life outcomes of children and families. Advocates move beyond their day-to-day professional responsibilities and work collaboratively to help others. Children and families today need teachers who understand their needs and who will work to improve the health, education, and well-being of all young children. You and other early childhood professionals are in a unique position to know and understand children and their needs and to make a difference in their lives by collaborating with their parents.

Kindergarten teacher Kristi Luetjen, a Connecticut Teacher of the Year, moves fluidly in and out of special education and is praised for integrating students with special needs into her classroom. She dedicates herself to improving the services for kindergartners with special needs. She blends the lines of regular and special education and created a new co-teaching model that incorporates yoga practice with the curriculum to create a yoga program for kindergartners. Luetjen is grateful for the opportunity to continue to advocate for her youngest students, her students with disabilities, and the general importance of a kindergarten education.

There is no shortage of issues to advocate for in the lives of children and families. Some of the issues in need of strong advocates involve providing high-quality...
programs for all children, reducing and preventing child abuse and neglect, closing the achievement gap between socioeconomic and racial groups, and providing good health and nutrition for each child. You must become actively engaged to change policies and procedures that negatively impact children. The following are some of the ways in which you can advocate for children and families:

- **Join an early childhood professional organization that advocates for children and families.** Organizations such as NAEC, the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), Children's Defense Fund (CDF), and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have local affiliates at colleges and universities and in many cities and towns, and they are very active in advocating for young children. You can serve on a committee or be involved in some other way.

- **Volunteer in community activities that support children and families.** Donate to an organization that helps children and families and volunteer your time at a local event that helps children get ready for school. For example, the Georgia Justice Project hosts its annual “Back-2-School” event to help their clients prepare for the first day of school. The community of Atlanta, Georgia, supplies families with backpacks, school supplies, and health and dental screenings.

  Early childhood major Chris Sayen, through his college, volunteers in a program called Success for Life Through Reading. Chris reads books to children in child care programs serving children from low-income families. Chris also helps raise funds to purchase new books for the children.

- **Investigate the issues that face children and families today.** Read the news and become informed about relevant issues. For example, subscribe to *Early Childhood News* and receive a biweekly electronic newsletter from a group that informs you of news affecting children aged birth through eight years and their families; news updates are automatically sent on current issues. Then, share the news with colleagues, family, and friends.

- **Seek opportunities to share your knowledge of young children and the issues that face children and families.** Inform others about the needs of young children by speaking with groups. For example, volunteer to meet with a group of parents at a local child care program to help them learn how to share storybooks with their young children, or meet with a local civic group that maintains the community park to discuss appropriate equipment for younger children. Identify a specific concern you have for children and families, and talk to others about that issue. For example, if you are concerned about the number of children who do not have adequate health care, learn the facts about the issue in your community, and then talk to people you know about ways to solve that problem. Begin with your own circle of influence: your colleagues, friends, family members, and other social groups of which you are a member.

- **Enlist the support of others.** Contact others to help you disseminate information about an issue. For example, enlist the help of your local Parent-Teacher Association in a letter-writing effort to inform town leaders about the need for safety improvements at the local playground.

- **Be persistent.** Identify an issue you are passionate about, and find a way to make a difference. There are many ways to advocate for children and families. Change takes time!

Within your own program or classroom, you will face many issues that should inspire you to advocate for your children and their families.
Caring and Kindness Are Keys to the Profession

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

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

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

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

We can also promote kindness and caring through community service. Each month, we “fill the buckets of others” in our school or community with acts of kindness. Recently, we made an American flag from chain-links and presented it to our local firefighters and police officers.
PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS

In addition to the six professional standards discussed in this chapter, professional dispositions play an important role in ensuring that you will be a well-rounded and highly qualified professional. Professional dispositions are the values, commitments, attitudes, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development, as well as your own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, and responsibility. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards for all children, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment. We have already discussed other dispositions, such as ethical practice, collaborating with colleagues and families, and reflective practice. Many programs that prepare professionals for the early childhood profession have a set of dispositions that are important for professional practice.

The Voice from the Field feature, “Caring and Kindness Are Keys to the Profession,” illustrates the importance of caring and kindness and provides many examples that you can use in your classroom.

CARING: THE MOST IMPORTANT DISPOSITION  For every early childhood professional, caring is the most important of all the professional dispositions. Professionals care about children; they accept and respect all children and their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a professional, you will work in classrooms, programs, and other settings where things do not always go smoothly; for example, children will not always learn ably and well, and they will not always be clean and free from illness and hunger. Children’s and their parents’ backgrounds and ways of life will not always be the same as yours. Caring means you will lose sleep trying to find a way to help a child learn to read, and you will spend long hours planning and gathering materials. Caring also means you will not leave your intelligence, enthusiasm, and other talents at home but will bring them into the center, the classroom, administration offices, boards of directors’ meetings, and wherever else you can make a difference in the lives of children and their families. The theme of caring should run deep in your professional preparation and in your teaching.
DAP AND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL

The NAEYC’s Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) on the NAEYC’s website represents a commitment to promote excellence in the constantly evolving field of early childhood education and early childhood special education. The position statement provides a framework for best practices rooted in numerous research studies on child development and learning, which promotes each child's optimal learning and development. There are three knowledge bases that form the core considerations of DAP. Figure 1.4 further clarifies these dimensions and how they are related. These are as follows:

**Knowledge of Social and Cultural Contexts in Which Children Live.** Values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions shape children’s lives at home and in their communities. Teachers must strive to understand these contexts to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family.

![Knowledge of Social and Cultural Contexts in Which Children Live](image)

**Knowledge of Child Development**
Knowledge of age-related characteristics that permit general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children’s learning and development.

**Knowledge of the Child as an Individual**
What practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.
Knowledge of Child Development. Knowledge of age-related characteristics that permit general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.

Knowledge of the Child, as an Individual. What practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.

The NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is clear about what constitutes DAP:

- Developmentally appropriate practice requires both meeting children where they are—which means that teachers must get to know them well—and enabling them to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable.
- All teaching practices should be (a) appropriate to children's age and developmental status, (b) attuned to children as unique individuals, and (c) responsive to the social and cultural contexts in which children live.
- Developmentally appropriate practice does not mean making things easier for children. Rather, it means ensuring that goals and experiences are suited to children's learning and development and challenging enough to promote their progress and interest.32

PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The educational dimension of professionalism involves knowing about and demonstrating essential knowledge of the profession and professional practice. This knowledge includes the history and ethics of the profession, understanding how children develop and learn, and keeping up-to-date on public issues that influence early childhood and the profession.

Training and certification are major challenges facing all areas of the early childhood profession and those who care for and teach young children. Training and certification requirements vary from state to state, and more states are tightening personnel standards for child care, preschool, kindergarten, and primary-grade professionals.

Many states have career ladders that specify the requirements for progressing from one level of professionalism to the next. For example, Figure 1.5 outlines a career pyramid of professional development. What two things do you find most informative about this career pyramid? How can you use the pyramid to enhance your professional development?

THE CDA PROGRAM

The Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program is a competency-based assessment system that offers early childhood professionals the opportunity to develop and demonstrate competence in their work with children aged five years and younger. Since its inception in 1975, the CDA program has provided a nationally recognized system that has stimulated early childhood training and education opportunities for teachers of young children in every state in the country and on military bases worldwide. The credential is recognized nationwide in state regulations for licensed child care and preschool programs as a qualification for teachers, directors, and/or family child care providers. The standards for performance this program has established are used as a basis for professional development in the field.
### Advanced Level and Degrees—MS, MA, PhD, EdD

**Traditional:**
- Teacher educator at a two-year college or four-year university
- Child development specialist
- Children guidance specialist
- Research/writer
- Early intervention
- Family education

**Related with further education/training/certifications:**
- Social worker
- Teacher/administration/special educator in a public elementary school
- Librarian
- Pediatric therapist-occupational and physical
- Child life specialist in a hospital
- Speech and hearing pathologist
- Dietitian for children
- Counselor
- Child psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Recreation supervisor
- Dental hygienist
- Child care center or playground/recreation center designer
- Probation officer
- County extension educator with 4-H
- Adoption specialist
- “Friend of Court” counselor
- Faith-based community coordinator and educator
- Infant/child mental health specialist

### Baccalaureate Level—Bachelors of Science (BS), Bachelors of Arts (BA), & Bachelors of Education (BEd)

**Traditional:**
- Early childhood teacher in public school, Head Start or child care settings
- Special education teacher
- Family child care home provider
- Nanny
- Administrator in a Head Start program, child care center
- Child care center director with the department of defense
- Parent/family educator
- Family advocate
- Director of school-age (out of school time) program

**Related with some positions requiring additional coursework at the baccalaureate level which will be in a field other than early childhood:**
- Recreation director/worker/leader
- Adult educator
- Children’s librarian
- Teacher of ELL and ESOL
- Music teacher, musician/entertainer for children
- Recreation camp director
- Camp counselor/scouts camp ranger
- Domestic violence prevention and education
- Childbirth education
gymnastics or dance teacher
- Pediatric nurse aide
- Faith community coordinator and educator
- Foster care services

### Associate Level—Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), & Associate of Applied Science (AAS)

**Traditional:**
- Head Start—Early Head Start teacher
- Child care teacher
- Family child care home provider
- Nanny
- Child care center director
- School-age provider
- Para-professional assistant
- Parent educator

**Related in addition to those listed at the core level:**
- Family and human services worker
- Entertainer for children at theme restaurants, parks or parties
- Social service aide
- Youth services
- Playground monitor
- Physical therapy assistant
- Faith community coordinators for families and children

### National Credential Level—Child Development Associate (CDA) and Certified Child Care Professional (CCP)

**Traditional:**
- Head Start teacher (CDA required)
- Child care teacher-master teacher
- Family child care home provider
- Nanny
- Teacher assistant in public school classroom (additional college hours required)

**Related positions which involve working with children in settings other than a child care center, family child care home, Head Start, or public school program may require specialized pre-service training:**
- Recreation center assistant
- Camp counselor
- Special needs child care assistant
- Cook’s aide, camp cook, Head Start or child care center cook

### Basic Level—Positions may require education and training depending on the position

**Traditional:**
- Child care teaching assistant
- Family child care home provider
- Head Start teacher assistant
- Nanny
- Foster parent
- Church nursery attendant
- Volunteer in public/private school setting

**Related positions which involve working with children in settings other than a child care center, family child care home, Head Start, or public school program may require specialized pre-service training:**
- Recreation center assistant
- Camp counselor
- Special needs child care assistant
- Cook’s aide, camp cook, Head Start or child care center cook

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**FIGURE 1.5** Early Childhood Professional Development Career Pyramid
The CDA program offers credentials to caregivers in four types of settings: (1) center-based programs for preschoolers, (2) center-based programs for infants/toddlers, (3) family child care homes, and (4) home visitor programs. Evidence of ability is collected from a variety of sources, including firsthand observational evidence of the CDA candidate’s performance with children and families. This evidence is weighed against national standards. The CDA national office sets the standards for competent performance and monitors this assessment process so it is uniform throughout the country.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Many community colleges provide training in early childhood education to qualify recipients to be child care aides, primary child care providers, and assistant teachers. Associate degree programs provide a foundation for knowledge in child development and working with children and families. These programs usually last two years and can provide the following early childhood education career opportunities: child care instructor, director, owner, director of a family day home, or manager of a corporate child care facility.33

BACCALAUREATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

These programs provide more extensive knowledge on early childhood education and work to ensure their students or candidates have mastered the six professional preparation competencies, with differences expected in depth and breadth of competencies for the bachelor’s level. The ages and grades to which the certification applies vary from state to state. Four-year colleges provide programs that may result in early childhood teacher certification. Some states have separate teacher certification for pre-kindergarten and grades K–3 and grades 4–6. In other states, early childhood and elementary teacher certification are combined in a K–6 program. This is the way it is at the author’s university, the University of North Texas.

ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

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

MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAMS

Depending on the state, individuals may gain initial early childhood certification at the master’s degree level. Many colleges and universities offer master’s programs for people who want to qualify as program directors or assistant directors or who may want to pursue a career in teaching. Linda Smerge graduated with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in elementary education from Northern Illinois University, as well as a juris doctorate. She taught second grade and kindergarten before practicing transactional care. Comprehensive care and education of young children outside their homes.

pre-kindergarten A class or program preceding kindergarten for children usually from three to four years old.

alternative certification Teacher certification through which an individual who already has at least a bachelor’s degree can obtain certification to teach.
Smerge felt the calling to return to the classroom and satisfy her desire to work with young children. Now Smerge is an Illinois Teacher of the Year!

Gay Barnes, 2012 Alabama state Teacher of the Year has taught for twenty-one years and obtained a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Alabama and a doctorate in literacy and reading. Gay is in charge of knowing her students as individual learners, knowing what they need to learn and how to plan and teach lessons that will take them to the next level of their learning.34

Check Your Understanding: NAEYC Standards

WHAT ARE NEW ROLES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS TODAY?

The role of the early childhood professional today is radically different from what it was even two or three years ago. Although the goals of professionalism and the characteristics of the highly effective professional remain the same, responsibilities, expectations, and roles have changed and will continue to change. Here are some of these new roles of the contemporary early childhood professional:

• **Teacher as an instructional leader.** Teachers have always been responsible for classroom and program instruction, but this role is now reemphasized and given a much more prominent place in what early childhood teachers do, such as planning for what children will learn, guiding and teaching so that children learn, assessing what children learn, and arranging the classroom environment so that children learn. The professional learning community we previously discussed will play a more prominent role throughout your teaching career to refine and focus your role as an instructional leader.

• **Teacher of Common Core State Standards, state, district, and program goals and standards.** Common Core State Standards and state standards provide a framework for what teachers should be teaching and students should be learning.

• **Teachers with intention.** Intentional teaching occurs when teachers teach for a purpose, are clear about what they teach, and teach so that children learn specific knowledge and skills. In this context, teachers spend more time during the day planning activities that involve the children in active learning while making a conscious effort to be more involved in each child’s learning process. Intentional teaching to standards can and should occur in a child-centered approach for specified times and purposes throughout the school day.

• **Teacher who maximizes instructional time.** Teachers are expected to maximize the full length of instructional time with activities and content that provide students with valuable learning experiences every day. Teachers emphasize engaging children in learning activities, spend more time on instruction, actively involve themselves in children’s learning, and increase the amount of time spent on learning.

• **Teacher of performance-based accountability for learning.** Teachers today are far more accountable for children’s learning. Previously, the emphasis was on the process of schooling; teachers were able to explain their role as “I taught Mario how to….,” and “Did Mario learn what he needs to know and do to perform at or above grade level?”
• **Teacher of literacy and reading.** Although the teaching of reading has always been a responsibility of early childhood professionals, this role has greatly expanded. Today, every early childhood teacher is now a teacher of literacy and reading. As more states and districts focus on having all children read on grade level by grade three, the effective teaching of reading is assuming a more prominent role.

• **Teacher who integrates technology into teaching and learning.** As our children become more technologically savvy, so do teachers. Today’s generation of children prefer to learn with technology. Teachers must integrate it into all instructional activities.

• **Teacher of twenty-first century skills.** The role of the contemporary teacher to be able to improve and advance students’ knowledge of twenty-first century skills is becoming more and more important in early childhood education. Teachers are expected to be advocates of these special skills and to integrate them into their teaching. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) says the following: “As the United States continues to compete in a global economy that demands innovation, P21 and its members provide tools and resources to help the U.S. education system keep up by fusing the 3Rs and 4Cs (Critical thinking and problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity and innovation). While leading districts and schools are already doing this, P21 advocates for local, state and federal policies that support this approach for every school.”

• **Teacher in the inclusive classroom.** Teaching in an inclusive classroom offers many new opportunities for you and your students. With the fields of early childhood and early childhood special education merging together, there is a greater demand for all teachers to have knowledge and skills for how to teach in inclusive classrooms. This may at first seem challenging for some teachers. However, with collaborative teamwork, this experience can be very successful for all involved. Teacher of the year Laura Ditman teaches second grade. When she began her teaching career three years ago, she did not expect she would have three children in her classroom with disabilities. Laura is fortunate to have the help and support of her principal and special education personnel as she meets the demands of teaching two children with learning disabilities and a third with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Laura believes all children can be successful and welcomes diversity in her classroom. She adapts the curriculum and designs instructional strategies to meet each student’s needs. Laura thinks the inclusive classroom is the best way to teach all children.

As the field of early childhood education continues to change, the details of your role as an early childhood professional will continue to be refined. You will want to devote the time and energy necessary to keep yourself in the forefront of your field. Figure 1.6 contains a developmental checklist for becoming a professional. Complete this checklist now, and review it throughout your teaching career to further refine your professional teaching role.

Daniel Leija, known as “Dan Dan the Science Man” and a fifth grade teacher at Esparza Elementary School, is a Texas Teacher of the year. Every Monday, Daniel conducts televised science experiments to the whole campus as one way to help bridge the gap between concepts and real world application. As a thirteen-year veteran of early childhood education, Leija has written an essay about what it means to be a teacher and to be passionate about early childhood education. His ideals (see p. 30) can guide your teaching, too!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAEYC Standard</th>
<th>Desired Professional Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Promoting Child Development and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Delivering Education and Child Care</td>
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<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Guiding Behavior</td>
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<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Theories of Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>Building Family and Community Relationships</td>
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<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families</td>
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<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families</td>
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<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Educating Diverse Students</td>
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<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Developmentally Appropriate Practice</td>
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<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Becoming a Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Ongoing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
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<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Philosophy of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Keeping Current in an Age of Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Professional Dispositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6</td>
<td>Historical Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: These professional development outcomes are consistent with the core values of the NAEYC and the competencies of the CDA.

**FIGURE 1.6 | Seventeen Competencies for Becoming a Professional: A Professional Development Checklist**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Accomplishment? (Circle One)</th>
<th>If High, Provide Evidence of Accomplishment</th>
<th>If Needs Improvement, Specify Action Plan for Accomplishment</th>
<th>Target Date of Completion of Accomplishment</th>
<th>See the following for more information on how to meet the desired professional outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 4 and 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1 and 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 3 and 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1, all Ethical Dilemma features, and all Voice from the Field features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1 and all Ethical Dilemma features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1, all Ethical Dilemma features, and all Voice from the Field features</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All chapters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1, all Ethical Dilemma features, and all Voice from the Field features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 4 and 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I AM A TEACHER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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

A philosophy of education is a set of beliefs about how children develop and learn; what children should know, learn, and do; and how to best teach young children. Your philosophy of education is based in part on your philosophy of life. What you believe about yourself, about others, and about life determines your philosophy of education. For example, we previously talked about caring. If you care about others, chances are you will be a caring person for your children. We know that when teachers care about and have high expectations for their children, then children achieve at higher levels. Core beliefs and values about education and teaching include what you believe about children, what you think are the purposes of education, how you view the teacher’s role, and what you think you should know and be able to do.

In summary, your philosophy of education guides and directs your daily teaching. As you reflect on your philosophy of education, think about what makes it special. What are some critical elements that you can incorporate into yours? The following guidelines will help you develop your philosophy of education.
READ

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

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

Candace Bloedorn, third grade teacher: Candace believes that every child has the ability to learn. As an educator, She hopes to create an environment where children are able to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them. Candace inspires and motivates her twenty-first-century learners by incorporating technology and providing instruction that is meaningful and hands-on.

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

The Activities for Professional Development section at the end of this chapter will also help you get started.

REFLECT

As you continue to study early childhood education, make notes and reflect about your philosophy of education. The following prompts will help you get started:

• I believe the purposes of education are . . . .
• I believe that children learn best when they are taught under certain conditions and in certain ways. Some of these are . . . .
• The curriculum—all of the activities and experiences—of my classroom should include certain "basics" that contribute to children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. These basics include . . . .
• Children learn best in an environment that promotes learning. Features of a good learning environment are . . . .
• All children have certain needs that must be met if they are to grow and learn at their best. Some of these basic needs are . . . .
• I would meet these needs by . . . .
• A teacher should have certain qualities and behave in certain ways. Qualities I think important for teaching are . . . .

In addition, reflect on this philosophy statement of a teacher of the year as a context for expanding and enriching your philosophy.

• First grade teacher Corey Haughton teaches her students how to teach themselves and gives them the necessary tools for becoming lifelong learners. Corey believes that when children love learning, they will love coming to school; they will love to study; they will ultimately love their work; they will learn to love, understand, and appreciate their family; they will learn to love, understand, and appreciate their community; and they will learn to love, understand and appreciate who they are, why they are here, and what they should be doing. Furthermore,
Corey believes education should build good, inquisitive people not skilled test takers. Corey intends to help create thousands of little questioning minds who want to know how everything works, why it should work, and how to do it better.37

DISCUSS

Discuss with successful teachers and other educators their philosophies and practices. The personal accounts in the Voice From the Field boxes in this chapter are evidence that a philosophy can help you be a successful, effective teacher. They also serve as an opportunity to “talk” with successful professionals and understand how they translate theory into practice. Join or create an on-line discussion group to share your thoughts and ideas about teaching. For example, Third Grade Teachers is a free, interactive website for third grade teachers and support staff that enables users to blog, chat, post photos, and collaborate with other teachers across the world to exchange ideas, activities, and resources.38

WRITE AND SHARE

Once you have thought about your philosophy of education, write a draft and have others read it. Writing and sharing helps you to clarify your ideas and redefine your thoughts because your philosophy should be understandable to others (although they do not necessarily have to agree with you).

EVALUATE

Finally, evaluate your philosophy using this checklist:

• Does my philosophy accurately relate my beliefs about teaching? Have I been honest with myself?
• Is it understandable to me and others?
• Do I clearly state what I believe are the key essentials of teaching?
• Do I clearly state what I consider to be the essentials that children should learn?
• Does it provide practical guidance for my teaching?
• Are my ideas consistent with one another?
• Does what I believe make good sense to me and others?

First grade teacher Callie Smith constantly evaluates and revises her philosophy of education. Her teaching philosophy varies from year to year, incorporating new research-based strategies. Overall, the main idea of her philosophy stays the same: that children are individuals that should be taught according to their personal learning styles and needs and that she must teach the whole child.

Now finalize your draft into a polished copy. A well-thought-out philosophy will be like a compass throughout your career. You will modify your philosophy throughout
your career, but it will be your global positioning system and serve to point you in the right direction and keep you focused on doing your best for children.

**ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE LEARNERS**

When you consider the makeup of pre-K–3 classrooms today, every classroom is an inclusion classroom. Teachers have always taught to all kinds of children with diverse needs. For example, in most classrooms you will find children of different developmental levels and capacities; different races and ethnicities; diverse religions and cultural beliefs and backgrounds; with different fears, hopes, and dreams; with diverse strengths and differences; different health levels and health-specific needs; with different family configurations; with different income levels; and with different learning styles and needs. In addition, all children, by the time they come to you, have a history of experiences, of feelings, pains and triumphs, all of which you have to consider as you plan and teach. As an early childhood professional you will be responsible for accommodating the naturally occurring diversity of your classroom.

The DEC and the NAEYC have issued a joint statement of inclusion and inclusionary practices. They define inclusion as education that embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.39

True inclusion, as the NAEYC and the DEC defines it, involves providing for the needs of all children of different abilities, ranging from the developmental to the social, from the academic to emotional and behavioral. To do so, the NAEYC and DEC recommend that you and your early childhood programs do the following:

1. *Create high expectations for every child to reach his or her full potential.*
   A commitment to early childhood inclusion involves high expectations for each child, regardless of ability.

2. *Develop a program philosophy on inclusion.* Programs need a philosophy on inclusion as a part of their broader program mission statement to ensure that teachers and staff operate under a similar set of assumptions, values, and beliefs about the most effective ways to support infants and young children with disabilities and their families.

3. *Establish a system of services and supports.* A system of services and supports for children with disabilities and their families should respond to the needs and characteristics of children with varying types of disabilities and levels of severity, including children who are at risk for disabilities.40

As an early childhood professional, you have a unique role in making inclusive education a reality by promoting inclusiveness in all aspects of children’s lives, giving each child a chance to thrive and succeed in school and in life.
ACTIVITIES TO APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED

1. Read and reflect again on the material presented at the beginning of the chapter about the five reasons change is sweeping across the early childhood profession. Which one of these reasons is most important to the profession? Why? Add a sixth reason you can identify for why and how the profession is changing. Be sure to give several clear reasons for your sixth example. Share this information with your colleagues on your class discussion board.

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

3. **KEY ASSESSMENT**: Develop a computer-based professional resource portfolio/folder. Your professional resource portfolio includes your philosophy of education, lesson plan ideas, reflections, book lists, DVDs, websites, and classroom resources that will help you as a beginning teacher. Use the six NAEYC Standards for Professional Preparation Programs, to organize your professional resource portfolio to authenticate how you are meeting the six standards. Use the **rubric** provided to guide your work.

4. Access the NAEYC website and review the developmentally appropriate practice position statement. Give three specific examples of how you will apply DAP to your teaching so that children learn at high levels. Use the professional development checklist in Figure 1.6 and a daily/monthly planner to develop your professional development plan for the next year. First, list your career development goals and then, on a monthly basis, specify activities, events, and other ways that you will achieve these goals. For example, in addition to attending classes at a local community college, Rosa Vasquez plans to read a book a month on a topic related to teaching.

5. Part of becoming a professional includes mapping out your career pathway. Use PowerPoint to state your goals for becoming a professional. For example, do you want to become a teacher assistant, a classroom teacher, a principal, a special educator? Tell what professional roles you aspire to and the professional development you will involve yourself in to achieve your pathway goals. Ask your professor if you can share your PowerPoint presentation with your class as part of the discussion of this chapter.
6. Review your teaching philosophy draft. Evaluate your strengths and areas in which you hope to improve. As you review your professional teaching philosophy statement, reflect on the examples from teachers of the year and others you read about in the chapter. What were some of the qualities you admire about Renee? What are the qualities that make her a professional? What dimensions of Renee’s background can you apply to your professional development?

7. Interview three teachers of inclusive classrooms and gather this information. (a) Why do the teachers think inclusive education is an important part of education today? (b) What do the teachers believe is their most important role as an inclusive teacher? (c) Ask teachers for suggestions on how you can become a high-quality inclusive teacher. Use the information from your interviews to inform and modify as appropriate, your professional development plan.

**LINKING TO LEARNING**

The following agencies and programs, which can be located easily online, provide additional information about topics discussed in this chapter.

**Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Professional Standards**
A division of the Council for Exceptional Children that promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

**Children’s Defense Fund**
Provides research and persistent advocacy for children’s rights on issues including poverty, discrimination, and gun violence to ensure every child a healthy, fair, and safe start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

**Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition**
Offers a nationally recognized, competency-based child development associate credential that provides training, assessment, and certification of child care professionals; also offers bilingual specialization.

**Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**
Offers a variety of information regarding children with disabilities and serves as an advocate for these exceptional children. Also acts as the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

**National Association for the Education of Young Children**
Publishes brochures, posters, videotapes, books, and journals discussing teaching and program ideas, ways to improve parent-teacher relations, and resources for students about safety, language arts, and learning. Offers training opportunities through national, state, and local affiliate groups.

**Third Grade Teachers**
A free, interactive website for third grade teachers and support staff that enables users to blog, chat, post photos, and collaborate with other teachers across the world to exchange ideas, activities, and resources.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. List the current public policy and issues in early childhood education.
2. Explain how you can prevent violence and bullying.
3. Identify ways you can provide for cultural diversity.
4. Explain how you can accommodate diverse learners in your classroom.
5. List hot topics in early childhood education and explain what they mean to you and your teaching.
In this chapter we discuss public policy and current issues as they influence early childhood education. At no time in U.S. history has there been so much interest and involvement by early childhood professionals in the development and implementation of public policy. Public policy refers to the proposed or actual actions of government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to address and solve social issues. It includes such things as laws; federal, state, and local government guidelines; position statements of professional organizations such as NAEYC; and court decisions. Public policy also involves the analysis and discussion of governmental decisions.

President Obama’s universal preschool agenda, the federal government’s current initiative to reform Head Start, and state legislators’ proposals to fail children who don’t read on grade level at the end of third grade are contemporary examples of public policy in action. Public policy influences education in every way from funding, to what children should know and be able to do (think Common Core State Standards), to what constitutes a high-quality early childhood program and teacher. Be assured that as an early childhood teacher you will be involved in and affected by public policy.

Contemporary Issues: Children, Families and You

Contemporary issues affect how you provide for children’s development, education, and care. They influence every dimension of practice from how we teach children to read, to the health care we provide, to special education services, to the quality of our teaching. We cannot ignore issues of education or pretend they do not exist. We must be part of the solution to make it possible for each child to achieve his or her full potential. Education today is very political, and politicians look to early childhood professionals to help develop educational solutions to social problems.

The 2013 State of America’s Children Report by the Children’s Defense Fund, shows that the number of children who live in poverty in America is on the increase. Since 2000, the number of children living in poverty has increased by four million. The number of children who fell into poverty between 2008 and 2009 was the largest single-year increase ever recorded. Poverty is the condition of having insufficient income to support a minimum standard of living. One out of nine (or 8.1 million) American children is living with an unemployed parent. Children whose parents are unemployed are at increased risk for experiencing poverty, homelessness, and child abuse. It is almost a given in early childhood education that low socioeconomic status, unhealthy lifestyles, and family circumstances are major contributors to poor school achievement and life outcomes. As a result, a number of social issues facing children today put their chances for learning and success at risk.

Check Your Understanding: Public Policy

Children of the Great Recession: The Gaps

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

**THE CURRENT SES STATUS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.** The headlines say it all: "Poverty Rate Hits 18-Year High as Median Income Falls." Forty-six million people live in poverty: That’s 15.1 percent of the population! Twenty-one percent of young children live in poor families. Currently, the federal poverty level is $23,550 for a family of four. This provides an idea of the circumstances that poor children and their families face. When I ask my university students to consider whether or not they could—or would want to—live as a part of a family of four where the income is less than $23,550, not one student answers affirmatively. No one wants to be poor, but we have many children and families who are. We should not bestow the label of poor or the conditions that go with being poor on any of our nation’s children. Socioeconomic status creates gaps between children of low socioeconomic homes and their middle- to high-income classmates.

**ACHIEVEMENT GAPS**

Perhaps the most devastating of all achievement gaps are those related to pervasive poverty. The achievement gaps among students of different income levels are severe. Compared to their peers from higher-income families, infants and toddlers from low-income families score lower on cognitive assessments, are less likely to be in excellent or very good health, and are less likely to receive positive behavior ratings at both 9 and 24 months old. Impoverished students are roughly two years of learning behind the average financially better-off student of the same age. The income achievement gap appears early and persists over the lifetime of a student.

Achievement gaps are the difference in performance between low-income and minority students, students of different genders, and students with different levels of maternal education, compared to that of their peers. Traditionally, low-income and minority children have not performed as well as their peers have on tests. Therefore, lower test scores for Latinos, blacks, and low-income students equals less school funding, which equals the perpetuation of the achievement gap.

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

**MATERNAL EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT GAP.** The causes of achievement gaps go beyond family income. Maternal education plays a significant role, too. Compared to infants whose mothers have a BA degree or higher, infants and toddlers whose mothers have less than a high school diploma score lower on both cognitive and behavioral measures. They are also less likely to be in excellent or very good health and are less likely to have secure attachments to their mothers. So, with regard to public policy, encouraging all girls to graduate from high school would be a start in the right direction.

Because school achievement gaps are linked to socioeconomic status and family income and wealth, we can say that the achievement gaps that are recognizable at children’s entry to preschool begin before they come to school. Merely providing programs to prevent and reduce achievement gaps on children’s entry to school is not sufficient. We must provide, beginning at birth, programs for parents, families, and children with the knowledge and skills equivalent to what middle- and upper-income families provide their children.
The Kindergarten Achievement Gap

In the opening pages of the third edition of NAEYC’s *Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Serving Children from Age Birth–8*, the authors discuss the early childhood achievement gap as one of the critical issues faced by children and early childhood professionals. Here is what they say:

All families, educators, and the larger society hope that all children will achieve in school and go on to lead satisfying and productive lives, but that optimistic future is not equally likely for all of the nation’s school children. Most disturbing, low income and African American and Hispanic students lag significantly behind their peers on standardized comparisons of academic achievement throughout the school years, and they experience more difficulties while in the school setting.

The achievement gap between students of various races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds is a serious issue that all of us as early childhood educators must address. Many children come to school already behind their more advantaged counterparts because they are not prepared to meet the demands of contemporary schooling. For example, children from low-income families are already well behind children in the highest socioeconomic groups.

The extent and seriousness of the achievement gap is further illustrated in the results of a survey of Michigan kindergarten teachers.

- Thirty-two percent of kindergarten teachers were not satisfied with the abilities of their kindergarten students when they started school, with an additional 50 percent being only somewhat satisfied.
- According to the teachers, only 65 percent of children entered kindergarten classrooms ready to learn the curriculum.
- Eighty-six percent of teachers reported that students who are behind academically at kindergarten entrance have an impact on their teachers’ ability to effectively provide instruction to the rest of the class.

In addition, there are many specific things that preschool and kindergarten teachers can do to help children catch up with their more advantaged peers. Children need specific language and literacy skills such as oral language, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and print awareness skills to be successful. Intentional teaching of these skills will go a long way to help eliminate the achievement gap.

Awareness of the extent of the problem is only one part of our efforts to reduce and eliminate achievement gaps. Taking effective action is the other part of the solution. Here are some things for which you can advocate:

- The opportunity for all children, but particularly children from low-income backgrounds and ELLs, to participate in preschool programs. There is a growing consensus that providing universal preschool will help all children socially and academically as they continue through the elementary grades.
- High-quality preschool and other early education programs for all children. Unfortunately, not all children have high-quality programs available to them; this is particularly true for students from low-income families.

“Ready schools and ready communities” means that the schools children attend and the communities they live in are united in their efforts to provide the health, nutrition, and educational experiences all children need in order to be successful in school and life. Ready schools are those that have strong leadership, have continuity between early child care and education, promote smooth transitions between home and school, and are committed to the success of every child as well as every teacher and adult who interacts with children at school. Ready communities provide neighborhoods that are safe; have high-quality schools; have safe homes free of lead paint; and have amenities such as parks, playgrounds, and libraries.

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This Voice from the Field illustrates the extent of the ways that the achievement gaps begin before children enter school.

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Reflect and Apply: Poverty
GENDER ACHIEVEMENT GAP. There has long been a prevailing idea that science-, math-, and athletic-based classes are considered to be “masculine” subjects. Teachers, parents, and students all hold this belief. The idea that when girls excel at math, it is due to hard work, and that when boys excel at math, it is due to natural talent, still persists. Teachers are reported to show preferential treatment to boys in math classes. As a result, there is a high participation gap in math and science subjects between genders. The math achievement gap between girls and boys remains. This has created a shortage of girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) classes and later on in scientific career fields (which produce more income than do female-dominated fields).

Another gender gap involves black males. For black boys, the gender gap relating to achievement is severe. As early as nine months of age, there are differences between black males and their white counterparts in cognitive and language development. By grade four, only 12 percent of black males in large city schools are proficient in reading. Public policy measures to counter the black male achievement gap should include such initiatives as working with parents and families to eliminate chaotic home lives that lead to behavioral and social problems and providing health and social services to young parents and their children. In addition, a seamless system of pre-K–3 education could do wonders to support school readiness and provide black children the cognitive and behavioral skills necessary for ongoing school success.

HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS. In addition, research informs us that teacher expertise has a direct correlation to high student performance and eliminating achievement gaps. Students who have highly effective teachers three years in a row score as much as 50 percent higher on achievement tests than do those who have ineffective teachers for three years in a row. Effective teachers know the content they are teaching, engage students in learning, and challenge them to greater accomplishments. Yet, frequently schools that serve low-income children often have the least-qualified and least-effective teachers. Thus, putting highly effective teachers in schools serving low-income and black children would be another way to eliminate the achievement gap that separates black boys from higher achievements and opportunities.

Implications for Teaching. Here are some things you could do to close the achievement gaps.

- Accept all children. We casually say that teachers should accept all children, but it is true that acceptance and respect are the foundation for all teacher–student relationships. When children know that they are loved, respected, and accepted by the teacher, then they are more likely to engage and be involved.
- Create classroom environments that are safe and trusting. The living environment of many children of poverty is one of high stress. Create a climate in your classroom in which children feel safe and comfortable and in which they can focus on being a student learner.
- Attune yourself to the vast array of needs that children of poverty bring to your classroom. The social world that many children of poverty live in dictates how they behave and act, so the more you know about the homes, cultures, and backgrounds that children come from, the more sensitive you can be to meet their needs.
- Work with parents and families to find out about children’s home lives. Many children of poverty lack the home support they need for learning. Help parents learn how to encourage their children to learn. Work with parents to provide learning materials in the home, such as books to read.
- Be accessible to parents at a variety of times before and after school. Many children’s parents work multiple and varied shifts. Parent–teacher conferences
need to be rescheduled to help meet the needs of the parents as well as the students.

• Work with parents to encourage that their children attend school regularly. If children are not in school, they cannot learn. Regular school attendance supports learning.

• Advocate for readiness programs for young children that provide them with skills they need to enter school so that they are successful.

• Have high expectations for all students. Low socioeconomic status does not mean that you should have low expectations for children. Quite, the contrary! All children need teachers who have high expectations for them. This is especially true of children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. High expectations increase children’s self-image, which leads to higher achievement.

• Help ensure the learning success of each child. Provide children with the individual instructional attention they need to master basic academic skills, particularly reading and mathematics. Increasingly, school districts are failing children who do not read on level at the end of the third grade. One of your goals is to make sure that children learn to read and write well and on grade level to avoid future failure and school dropout.

• **Differentiate** (teach in response to the diverse needs of students so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively regardless of differences in ability) instruction so all children learn. Angelica L. Jordan, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Teacher of the Year, believes that effective teachers spend time building relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. When she knows a student’s likes, dislikes, and interests, she can differentiate lessons.14

**FAMILY ISSUES**

A primary goal of early childhood education is to meet children’s needs in culturally and developmentally appropriate ways. Early childhood professionals agree that a good way to meet the needs of children is through their families, whatever their family unit may be. Family-centered practice is one of the cornerstone features of early childhood education and early childhood special education. This follows the fundamental notion that children’s development is influenced by their environment: their family, teachers, school, town, media, governmental systems, and so on.15 Review Figure 2.1, which shows the potential benefits of working with children and their families.

**BENEFITS OF FAMILY-CENTERED PROGRAMS.** Providing for children’s needs through and within the family system makes sense for a number of reasons. First, helping families function better means that everyone stands to benefit. When the other people in the family unit—mother, father, grandparents, and relatives—function better, children in the family function better, too.

Second, professionals frequently need to address family problems and issues to help children effectively. For example, helping parents gain access to adequate, affordable health care means that the whole family, including the children, will be healthier. And when children are healthy, they achieve more.16

Third, early childhood professionals can do many things concurrently with children and their families that benefit both. Literacy is a good example. Early childhood professionals take a family approach to helping children, their parents, and other family members learn to read, write, speak, and listen. Teaching parents to read helps them understand the importance of supporting their children in the learning process.

Fourth, addressing the needs of children and their families as a whole (i.e., the holistic approach to education and the delivery of services) enables early childhood professionals and others to address a range of social concerns simultaneously. Programs that provide education and support for literacy, health care, nutrition,
obesity prevention, healthy living, abuse prevention, and parenting are examples of this family-centered approach. A major trend in early childhood education is that professionals are expanding the family-centered approach to meeting the needs of children and families.

Thus, keeping children healthy becomes an important aspect of early childhood programs. In addition to nutrition and health information children can use at home, early childhood professionals can include daily activities in the classroom to support healthy lifestyles.

**CHANGING FAMILY UNITS.** Families are in a continual state of change as a result of social issues and changing times. Even the definition of what a family is varies as society changes. Consider the following ways families are changing:

1. **Structure.** Families now include arrangements other than that of the traditional nuclear family:
   - Single-parent families, headed by mothers or fathers
   - Stepfamilies, including individuals related by either marriage or adoption
   - Heterosexual, gay, or lesbian partners living together with children
   - Extended families, which may include grandparents, uncles, aunts, other relatives, and individuals not related by kinship

![A Model for Meeting the Needs of Children and Families](image-url)
2. **Roles.** As families change, so do the roles of parents, family members, and others:

- More parents work and have less time for their children and family affairs.
- Working parents combine the roles of parents and employees. The number of hats that parents wear will increase as families change.
- Grandparents and non-family members must learn new parenting roles.

As families continue to change, you and other early childhood professionals must develop creative ways to provide services to children and families of all kinds.

**Working Parents.** More and more families find that both parents must work to make ends meet. Reasons for more women working include decline in male earnings; the growth of single parent families; and the increase in women's educational levels. As a result of the Great Recession, more women entered the work force than ever before.

An increasing percentage of women—68 percent with children under age six—are currently employed, thereby creating a greater need for early childhood programs. This demand focuses increased attention on early childhood programs and encourages early childhood professionals to meet working parents' needs. You can help working parents by effectively communicating with them and providing ways for them to be connected to their children's learning.

**Collaborating with Families.** Early childhood professionals agree that a good way to meet the needs of children is through their families, whatever the family units may be. As families change, early childhood professionals have to develop new and different ways of meeting parents' and children's needs. Providing for children's needs through and within the family system makes sense for a number of reasons:

- The family system has the primary responsibility for meeting children's many needs. Parents are children's first teachers, and the experiences and guidance they do or do not provide shapes their children for life. It is in the family that basic values, literacy skills, and approaches to learning are set and reinforced. This is why it is important to work with families and help them get a good start on parenting. For example, teachers can encourage parent phone calls or plan regular conferences to promote family collaboration.

- Teachers frequently need to address family problems and issues simultaneously as they help children. For example, working with family services agencies to help parents access adequate, affordable health care means that the whole family, including children, will be healthier.

- Early childhood professionals can work with children and their families and benefit both. Family literacy is a good example. Helping children, their parents, and other family members learn to read and write helps the whole family. Many early childhood programs have literacy programs for parents and children. For example, the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) partners with the National Center for Family Literacy and addresses the growing needs of Hispanic and other immigrant families by increasing English language and literacy skills for adults while also supporting parents' involvement in their children's education. Families matter in the education and development of children. Working with parents becomes a win-win proposition for everyone. You are the key to making family-centered education work.
Fathers and Early Childhood. Fathers are rediscovering the joys of parenting and working with young children, and early childhood education is discovering fathers! Men are now playing a more active role in providing basic care, love, and nurturance to their children. Fathers are more concerned about their role and their participation in family events before, during, and after the birth of their children than they were in previous generations. Fathers want to be involved in the whole process of child rearing.

An increasing number of fathers—3.4 percent of all dads or 176,000—are full-time stay-at-home dads. Kindergarten teacher Lauren Gonzales’s husband is a full-time stay-at-home dad. He bathes, feeds, diapers, and cares for their three-month-old child. He also helps his nine-year-old stepdaughter with homework and takes her to extracurricular activities. And fathers are receiving some of the employment benefits that have traditionally gone only to women, such as paternity leaves, flexible work schedules, and sick leave for family illness.

Many men feel unprepared for fatherhood, and as a result, early childhood programs and agencies such as hospitals and community colleges are providing courses and seminars to introduce fathers to the joys, rewards, and responsibilities of fathering.

Single Parent Families. An important part of your professional preparation is to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for collaborating with single-parent families. The number of one-parent families continues to increase. In 2013, 40.8 percent of all births were to single women.

People become single parents for a number of reasons: About 36 percent of all marriages end in divorce, and some parents, including a growing number of college-educated women, are single parents by choice. In addition, liberalized adoption procedures, artificial insemination, surrogate childbearing, and increasing public support for single parents make this lifestyle an attractive option for some individuals. The reality is that more women are choosing to bear children without marrying.

No matter how people become single parents, they have tremendous implications for early childhood professionals. In response to growing single parenthood, early childhood programs are developing curricula to help children and their single parents. In addition to needing assistance with child care, single parents frequently seek help in child rearing, especially in regard to parenting practices. At Maplebrook Elementary School in Naperville, Illinois, early childhood professionals conduct seminars to help parents gain skills that will maximize children’s learning and social growth. In seminars parents learn things such as how to praise, how to disapprove, time-out procedures for misbehavior, and how to set up special incentive systems for motivating cooperative behavior. How well early childhood professionals meet the needs of single parents can make a difference in how successful single parents are in providing for the needs of their children and other family members. Thus your support of single parents can impact how well their children progress in your programs and classroom.

Readiness includes physical growth and general health, such as being well-rested, well-fed, and properly immunized. How does children’s health status affect their readiness for learning?

WELLNESS AND HEALTHY LIVING. As you know, when you feel good, life goes much better. The same is true for children and their families. Poor health and unhealthy living conditions are major contributors to poor school achievement and
life outcomes. A number of health issues facing children today put their chances for learning and success at risk.

**Illnesses.** When you think of children’s illnesses, you probably think of measles, chicken pox, and strep throat. Actually, dental caries (cavities), asthma, lead poisoning, obesity, and diabetes are the leading childhood diseases.

Watch the following video to see how two teachers respond to children’s symptoms of illness. Notice in particular how each teacher responds. Reflect on which teacher responds most appropriately to each illness.

**Dental Caries.** Dental caries (tooth decay) remains the most prevalent chronic disease in both children and adults, even though it is largely preventable. Forty-two percent of children two to eleven have had dental caries in their primary teeth, and 23 percent have untreated dental caries. Black and Hispanic children and those living in families with lower incomes suffer from twice as much tooth decay as do their more affluent peers, and they are less likely to have health insurance. Providing children the dental health they need should be a huge priority for society and the early childhood profession. Dental caries leads to children being less ready to learn and results in diminished productivity in the classroom. Tooth decay causes pain and infection, leading to impaired chewing, speech, and facial expression, in addition to a loss in self-esteem. Children with dental health problems show poor academic performance. They are distracted by pain and often have behavioral problems. As well, tooth decay leads to a lack of attendance in school, with fifty-one million school hours lost to dental-related illness each year.

**Implications for Teaching.** Some things you can do to promote children’s dental health include the following:

- Provide parents with information about the importance of toothbrushing and flossing. Some parents are surprised to learn that toothbrushing begins with the first tooth!
- Remind children of the importance of brushing and flossing by engaging them in reading stories, dramatic play, and other activities.
- Encourage parents to cut back on and reduce the amount of carbonated beverages and candy that their children consume.
- Provide time in the daily schedule for children to brush and floss their teeth, especially after meals and snacks. Many early childhood programs, including Head Start, do this.
- Invite dental hygienists to present programs on the dos and don’ts of good dental health.

**Asthma.** Asthma, a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways, is also one of the most prevalent childhood illnesses in the United States. An estimated 7.1 million children under the age of eighteen suffer from asthma; 4.1 million children suffer from an asthma attack or episode every year. Asthma is caused in part by poor air quality, dust, mold, animal fur and dander, allergens from cockroaches and rodents feces, and strong fumes. Many of these causes are found in poor and low-quality housing.

In your role as advocate, you can work with the American Lung Association, which has two initiatives designed to help children with asthma. One program is the Asthma Friendly School Initiative (AFSI). The other is the Kids with Asthma Bill of Rights, designed to help children with asthma talk to their parents and teachers about asthma management.
You will want to reduce asthma-causing conditions in your early childhood program and work with parents to reduce the causes of asthma in their homes.

**Implications for Teaching.** In your school environment, here are some things you can do to reduce asthma:

- Prohibit smoking around children.
- Keep your classroom and center clean and free of mold. Mold is a frequent trigger of asthma attacks.
- Reduce or eliminate carpeting.
- Have children sleep on mats or cots rather than on the floor.
- Regularly change air conditioner filters.
- Wipe down all classroom surfaces each day.
- Use nontoxic and odor-free pest-control products.
- Work with parents to ensure that their children are getting appropriate asthma medication.

**Lead Poisoning.** Lead poisoning is also a serious childhood disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that approximately 535,000 U.S. children aged one to five years have elevated blood lead levels and that 3 percent of the nation’s children have lead levels that pose a risk to their health. Lead enters the body through inhalation and ingestion. These children are at risk for low IQs, short attention spans, reading and learning disabilities, hyperactivity, and behavioral problems. A major source of lead poisoning is from old lead-based paint in many older homes and apartments; most homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint in them. The federal government banned the use of paint in 1978, but because paint with lead has a sweet taste that children like, it is not uncommon for them to eat chips of paint and to scratch a tooth on window sills. Across the United States, many homes are near the sites of former lead factories. The soil in these areas is so contaminated with lead that it poses grave risks to the children who play in it—yet many do. Young children are especially vulnerable because they put many things in their mouths and crawl on floors.

**Implications for Teaching**

- Your primary roles in the prevention of lead poisoning in children are awareness and education.
- Make parents aware of the danger of lead poisoning in their children. Agencies such as the CDC provide flyers and brochures about the dangers of and prevention of lead poisoning. In addition, in October of each year, the CDC sponsors a National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.
- Advise parents to have their children tested for lead as part of a periodic health examination.
- Alert parents to the recall of any toys with paint that may contain excess amounts of lead.

**Diabetes.** Diabetes, a chronic condition that affects how the body metabolizes sugar, is fast becoming one of the most common childhood diseases. There are two types of diabetes in children. Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. In Type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin. In Type 2 diabetes, the body produces insufficient amounts
of insulin, or the body adequately uses the insulin that is produced. The increase in Type 2 diabetes in children is alarming because it is usually an adult disease, more frequently diagnosed beginning in middle adulthood. Reasons for the increase in Type 2 diabetes include increasing childhood obesity, poor eating habits, and an emphasis on high calorie and sugary foods and drinks. Preventive measures for Type 2 diabetes go hand in hand with efforts to reduce childhood obesity—stressing healthy diets and regular (daily) exercise.\footnote{32}

**Implications for Teaching.** Again, your primary role in helping to prevent childhood diabetes is to raise awareness of the problem and to provide parents with information about diabetes and how to prevent it.

- Alert parents to the growing numbers of children with diabetes. This is a first step in prevention. Some parents may not know what diabetes is or they may think of it as only an adult disease.
- Advise parents about the risk for their children of sugary drinks, high-calorie foods, and overeating. Nutrition education can be a primary way to reduce the number of children with diabetes.

**Obesity.** Today’s generation of young children is often referred to as the “Supersize Generation” because of their obesity. In fact, the Supersize Generation is getting younger! The American Heart Association reports that more than nine million children between the ages of six and nineteen years are considered to be overweight; 11.5 percent of children between the ages of six months and twenty-three months are overweight; and nearly 14 percent of preschool children between the ages of two and five years are overweight. Among children ages two to nineteen years, 17.6 percent of American children are overweight.\footnote{33} Additionally, the tipping point for early childhood obesity begins in infancy. More and more obesity prevention programs are geared toward infants and toddlers.\footnote{34}

In addition, new waves of research report the relationship of obesity to other diseases and health problems, especially later in life. Excess weight in childhood and adolescence predicts weight problems in adults. Overweight children, ages ten to fourteen, with at least one overweight or obese parent, are reported to have an 80 percent likelihood of being overweight into adulthood.\footnote{35} Research reveals that children who are substantially overweight throughout much of their childhood and adolescence have a higher incidence of depression than do those who aren’t overweight. There are several significant findings related to this research. First, a link was shown between obesity and psychiatric disorders. Second, researchers found that boys were at greater risk than girls for weight-related depression.\footnote{36}

The dramatic rise in obesity is due to a combination of factors, including less physical activity and more fat and calorie intake. More children spend more time in front of televisions and computer screens, and fewer schools mandate physical education. Also, restaurant promotions to “supersize” meals encourage high-fat and high-calorie diets. Studies suggest that a ban on fast-food advertisements on television, especially those targeting young children, could reduce the number of overweight children by as much as 18 percent. Although it is unlikely that such a ban will ever materialize, these studies demonstrate how advertising food and childhood obesity are linked.\footnote{37}

As the rate of obesity in American children continues to rise, it is especially important for you to keep yourself healthy and to model healthy habits for the children you teach to ensure that they have a good role model as encouragement to develop healthy nutritional habits.
Implications for Teaching. Here are some ways you can help children and parents win the obesity war:

- **Provide parents with information about nutrition.** What children eat—or don’t eat—plays a major role in how they grow, develop, and learn. Diet also plays a powerful role in whether or not children engage in classroom activities with energy and enthusiasm. For example, send home copies of MyPlate for Kids (see Figure 2.2). You can log on to MyPlate for Kids and individualize a food “plate” for each of your children. You can also send this information home to parents and share with them how to access and use the MyPlate nutrition guide in order to serve healthy meals to their families.

- **Encourage your children to eat breakfast and encourage parents to provide breakfast for their children.** Also, investigate your school’s lunch and breakfast programs. If your program does not serve breakfast to children, you can advocate for such a program for children whose families’ incomes make them eligible for federal- and state-supported nutrition programs. Research is very clear that serving breakfast to children who do not get it elsewhere significantly improves their cognitive abilities; this enables them to be more alert, pay better attention, and do better in terms of reading, math, and on standardized test scores.38

- **Counsel parents to pull the plug on the television.** TV watching at mealtime is associated with obesity because children are more likely to eat fast foods such as pizza and salty snack foods while they watch TV. Also, children who watch a lot of television tend to be less physically active, and inactivity tends to promote weight gain.39

- **Cook with children and talk about foods and their nutritional values.** Cooking activities are also a good way to eat and talk about new foods. Cooking and other nutrition-related activities are ideal ways to integrate math, science, literacy, art, music, and other content areas.
• **Integrate literacy and nutritional activities.**
  Reading and discussing labels is a good way to encourage children to be aware of and think about nutritional information. For example, calories provide energy; too much fat and sugar are not good for us; and protein is important, especially in the morning.40

• **Provide opportunities for physical exercise and physical activities every day.** For their part, schools are fighting the obesity war in the following ways:
  - Banning the sale of sodas and candy bars in school vending machines during lunch hours.41
  - Teaching about and encouraging healthier lifestyles in and out of school.
  - Including salad bars as part of their cafeterias. For example, in California, the Riverside Unified School District Farm to School Program is a program designed to promote healthy eating in children by increasing the availability of fruits and vegetables in school lunches and providing nutrition education to increase knowledge of and improve attitudes toward eating a variety of locally grown produce.42
  - Banning bake sales and other fundraising activities involving non-nutritious foods; banning cupcakes and other sweets at class birthday parties; and urging the use of healthier snack choices for homeroom celebrations.43
  - Restoring recess and physical education to the elementary school curriculum.
  - Working with parents to help them get their children to be more active and to eat healthier foods at home.

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

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

The goal of this program is to reduce childhood obesity from 20 percent to 5 percent by 2030.
Gender and Obesity. Have you ever heard an adult say, “Boys are just more active than girls; they need more time to run and play outdoors” or “The girls are content to play inside; it’s the boys who have to get out on the playground”? Knowledgeable preschool and primary teachers know that vigorous physical activity is very important for girls as well as for boys. Both girls and boys need and deserve plenty of time to be physically active indoors and out. Improved aerobic endurance, muscular strength, motor coordination, and growth stimulation of the heart, lungs, and other vital organs are among the benefits of physical activity for all children. Giving equal opportunity to girls and boys—starting in preschool—is what Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is all about.

Physical activity, for both genders, helps build and maintain healthy muscles, bones, and joints; increases the body’s infection-fighting white blood cells and germ-fighting antibodies; helps control weight; and reduces the risk of developing such illnesses as diabetes, heart disease, and many types of cancer.

Reflect and Apply: Obesity

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

- Every day in the United States, 10 young children are murdered, 16 killed in firearm accidents, and 8,042 are reported as physically abused.44
- Over three million children per year witness domestic violence in their homes.45
- Children in poverty are 22 times more likely to be physically abused and 60 more times likely to die from the abuse than those in the middle class.46
- By the time they reach middle school, children will have watched 100,000 acts of violence through television, including 8,000 depictions of murder.47
- On average, school-aged children play video games fifty-three minutes per day; 49 percent of video games feature serious violence, and 40 percent show violence in a comic way.48

Research shows that violent behavior is learned and that it is learned early.49 Your students’ brains are remarkably plastic, or capable of being molded or adapted to conditions; the neurons are still arranging and rearranging connections. Brain plasticity usually works to children’s advantage, because it enables them to learn and develop in spite of poor influences, allowing us to redirect neural pathways away from violence and toward amiable and peaceful conflict resolution. However, when children are routinely and repeatedly exposed to violence, their emotions, cognition, and behavior become centered on themes of aggression and violence.
Increasing acts of violence lead to proposals for how to provide violence-free homes and educational environments; how to teach children to get along nonviolently with others, such as by using puppets to discuss feelings with younger children or by role-playing and discussing appropriate ways to behave on the playground with older children; and how to reduce violence on television, in the movies, and in video games. Advocating for reducing violence on television, for example, in turn leads to discussions for ways to limit children's television viewing. Such proposals include “pulling the plug” on television; using the V-chip included in every TV, which enables parents to block out programs with violent content; boycotting companies whose advertisements support programs with violent content; and limiting violence shown during prime-time viewing hours for children.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING.** Here are some other steps you can take to prevent or reduce violence in children's lives:

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

**BULLYING**

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

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

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING.** Here are some things you can do to help prevent bullying in your classroom:

- Talk to children individually and in groups when you see them engage in hurtful behavior. For instance: “Chad, how do you think Brad felt when you pushed him out of the way?”
• Be constantly alert to any signs of bullying behavior in your classroom and intervene immediately.
• Teach cooperative and helpful behavior, courtesy, and respect. Much of what children do, they model from others’ behaviors. When you provide examples of courteous and respectful behavior in your classroom it sets a good example for children.
• Have children work together on a project. Then, have the students talk about how they got along and worked together.
• Make children and others in your classroom feel welcome and important.
• Talk to parents and help them understand your desire to stop bullying and to have a bully-free classroom.
• Conduct a workshop for parents on anti-bullying behavior and for signs of bullying.
• Report bullying to your principal! Remember that if you are aware of bullying behavior and do nothing about it, then you have not done your job of protecting and advocating for every child.
• Teach your students the “talk, walk, and squawk” method (or some other method your school uses) in response to bullying. Role-play and practice this technique in class:
  • **Talk**: Encourage your students to stand up for themselves verbally: “Leave me alone” or “You don’t scare me” are some choices. Have children practice these responses in a calm and assertive voice.
  • **Walk**: Teach your students to walk away, but not to run away. If students run away, it is likely to increase the intensity of the bullying.
  • **Squawk**: The last step is to tell a teacher. Teachers can then take steps to halt the bullying behavior.51
• Keep parents informed of their child’s interactions with violence in school. If a child is a bully or is being bullied, tell the parents so that you and they can collaborate to remediate the situation.
• Read books about bullying. You can read books about bullying to and with your children during story time, group reading lessons, guided reading, and shared reading. You can also send books home for parents to read with their children. The following are some books you might want to read:
  
  • *The Juice Box Bully* by Bob Sornson, Maria Dismondy and Kim Shaw. Have you ever seen a bully in action and done nothing about it? The kids at Pete’s new school get involved instead of being bystanders. When Pete begins to behave badly, his classmates teach him about “The Promise.” Will Pete decide to shed his bullying ways and make “The Promise”?
  
  • *The Savvy Cyber Kids: Defeat of the Cyber Bully* by Ben Halpert and Taylor Southerland. While playing an online game, CyberPrincess and CyberThunder encounter a cyber-bully. Throughout the book, Tony and Emma learn strategies on how to appropriately respond to a bully online.
  
  • *Confessions of a Former Bully* by Trudy Ludwig and Beth Adams. After Katie gets caught teasing a schoolmate, she’s told to meet with Mrs. Petrowski, the school counselor, so she can make right her wrong and learn to be a better friend. Bothered at first, it doesn’t take long before Katie realizes that bullying has hurt not only the people around her, but her too.
  
  • *Jungle Bullies* by Steven Kroll and Vincent Nguyen. No one in the jungle will share. Elephant orders Hippo out of the pond; in turn Hippo orders Lion out of the path; Lion orders Leopard out of the grass; and Leopard orders Monkey off the branch of the tree. But Monkey’s Mama has some very good advice for standing up for himself and teaching others how to share.
  
  • *Bullies Never Win* by Margery Cuyler and Arthur Howard. When the class bully, Brenda Bailey, makes fun of Jessica’s skinny legs and her boyish lunch box, Jessica doesn’t know what to do. She doesn’t want to be a tattletale, but she also wants the bullying to stop. Can Jessica find the courage to stand up for herself?

### Cyberbullying

The wide-spread use of the Internet, iPhones, texting devices, and social networking sites has led to the development of a new type of bullying: cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the threat, stalking, harassment, torment, and humiliation of one child by another through cell phones, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, chat rooms, blogs, texting, and picture messaging. Cyberbullying is often anonymous and sometimes occurs between cliques and a single victim. Cyberbullying occurs in females more frequently than males.52 Examples of cyberbullying include the following:

• Sydney sent Emily an e-mail that said she was fat, stupid, and ugly.
• Mia Photoshopped Gina’s face onto a naked picture and posted it on MySpace.
• Kiera posted a note in a popular after-school study group chat that Shawna was the biggest blank in the third grade.
• Verbally abusing another person during an online game.
• Stealing another person’s password and pretending to be that person in a chat room.

### Implications for Teaching

Here are some ways to help prevent cyberbullying:

• Tell children of the consequences of forwarding any type of electronic message.
• Discuss with children the dangers involved in posting and sharing their personal information online and through social media.
• Advise students that if they think they are being cyberbullied they should log-off, report the incident to their teachers and parents, and change privacy settings on social networking sites.
Because most cyberbullying takes place outside the classroom, parents must take time to educate children about it. Here are more steps that parents can take to prevent cyberbullying in their own homes.

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

Being aware of the different ways that you can prevent cyberbullying will help you become more knowledgeable about the ways you can avoid this type of behavior in your classrooms. When you are alert for signs of cyberbullying, then you can lessen the likelihood that children will be the victims of the electronic age version of the playground bully.

**PROVIDING FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Changing demographics are changing the United States and U.S. public schools. These changes mean that more students will require special education, English as a Second Language education, and other special services. Issues of culture and diversity shape instruction and curriculum. Changing demographics also have tremendous implications for how you teach and how your children learn.

**CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**

Minority children are in most of the nation’s school districts. Projections are that by 2050, minorities will constitute more than 47 percent of the American population. The population of young children in the United States reflects the population at large and thus represents a number of different cultures and ethnicities. The New Majority Minorities are primarily Hispanic and Asian. Thus, many cities and school districts have populations that express great ethnic diversity, including Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Across the United States, seismic demographic changes herald how diverse populations are transforming regional geographic areas, states, school districts, and schools.

The South has become the first region in the country in which more than half of public school students are poor. Additionally, more than half of students in the South and Southwest are members of minorities (Arizona, 56 percent; California, 71 percent; Florida, 54 percent; Georgia, 54 percent; Louisiana, 51 percent; Mississippi, 54 percent; Nevada, 57 percent; New Mexico, 70 percent; and Texas, 65 percent). This shift is fueled by an influx of Latinos and other ethnic groups, the return of African Americans to the South, and higher birth rates among African American and Latino families. The numbers also herald the future of the United States as a whole because minority students are expected to exceed 50 percent of public school enrollment by 2020 and the numbers of students poor enough to qualify for free or reduced-price lunches continues to rise. The constantly changing population demographics mean teachers have to understand diversity and embrace it in their classroom. The nation’s schools have to do a better job of educating minorities. You can design your classroom and teaching to address issues relating to the needs of diverse populations and groups.
THINKING AND ACTING MULTICULTURALLY

As an early childhood professional, keep in mind that you are the key to the classroom environment that promotes cultural competency for all children. Cultural competence involves knowledge of other cultures and an ability to confidently interact with people of other cultures.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

• **Recognize that all children are unique.** Children have special talents, abilities, and styles of learning and relating to others. Make your classroom a place in which children are comfortable being who they are. Always value uniqueness and diversity.

• **Get to know, appreciate, and respect the cultural backgrounds of your children.** Visit families and community neighborhoods to learn more about cultures and religion and the ways of life they engender. Children are rooted in their families’ culture and the family structure is the basis of the child's culture.

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

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

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

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

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

It is up to you to help your children to accept and respect all people and their cultures.

CULTURAL AWARENESS. Cultural awareness is the appreciation for and understanding of people’s cultures, socioeconomic status, and gender. It includes understanding one’s own culture. Cultural awareness programs and activities focus on other cultures while making children aware of the content, nature, and richness of their own. Learning about other cultures concurrently with their own culture enables children to integrate commonalities and appreciate differences without inferring inferiority or superiority of one or the other. Promoting cultural awareness in an early childhood program has implications far beyond your school, classroom, and program. Culture influences and affects work habits, interpersonal relations, and a child’s general outlook on life. Being a culturally aware teacher means that you are sensitive to the socioeconomic backgrounds of children and families. For example, we know that low family socioeconomic status tends to dampen children’s school achievement. The same is true with children’s school achievement and level of maternal education. Research
shows that children that have educated parents enter school with a higher level of academic skills and continue to perform better than other children. By learning about family background you can provide children from diverse backgrounds the extra help they may need to be successful in school.

Early childhood professionals must take these influences into consideration when designing curriculum and instructional processes for the impressionable children they teach. One way to accomplish the primary goal of cultural infusion and awareness—to positively change the lives of children and their families—is to infuse acceptance of diversity in early childhood activities and practices. Children must be culturally competent. They need to develop proficiency to respond respectfully and effectively to diverse cultures.

**USING APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.** Carefully selected and appropriate instructional materials support children's cultural awareness. What does this mean? Here are some suggestions for achieving the goal of promoting cultural awareness.

- **Multicultural literature.** Choose literature that embraces similarities and welcomes differences regarding how children and families live their whole lives.
- **Themes.** Early childhood professionals may select and teach thematic units that help strengthen children’s understanding of themselves, their culture, and the cultures of others. Here are some appropriate theme topics, all of which are appropriate for meeting various state standards and the standards of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS):
  - Getting to know myself, getting to know others
  - What is special about you and me?
  - Growing up in the city
  - Tell me about Africa (or South America, China, etc.)
- **Personal accomplishments.** Add to classroom activities, as appropriate, the accomplishments of people from different cultural groups, women of all cultures, and individuals with disabilities.

**TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.** You will teach children from different cultures whose first language is not English. Educating students with diverse backgrounds and individual needs makes for a challenging and rewarding career. Learning how to constantly improve your responses to children’s needs and improve learning environments and curricula will be one of your ongoing professional responsibilities. Given the high number of students from diverse backgrounds, today it is more important than ever that educators be aware of cultural differences. Lack of knowledge of these differences can lead to the overrepresentation of students from diverse backgrounds in special education programs. The accompanying Voice from the Field, “How to Help English Language Learners Succeed,” provides you with seven strategies for becoming a successful teacher of linguistically and culturally diverse children (see p. 58).

**GREEN SCHOOLS AND GREEN CURRICULA**

All across the United States, schools are going green. Green schools are those in which the building creates a healthy environment conducive to learning while saving energy, resources, and money. Green schools and curricula are a response to eco-issues around the world and represent ways to save energy, conserve resources, infuse curricula with environmental education, build school gardens, and offer more healthy school lunches.
GREEN CURRICULA. Green schools are only one part of contemporary eco-friendly initiatives. Making the school curriculum greener is the other part. More schools and teachers are teaching children and their families about the environment and how to preserve it and about the benefits of green living. At the University City Children’s Center in St. Louis, Missouri, preschool children have a garden bed in which they raise vegetables that become part of their school lunches. Child care programs are turning to eco-friendly diapers, organic baby foods, odor-free, zero-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints, and the use of nontoxic techniques to control pests.

Just as saving the environment permeates all of our daily lives, so too is the eco-movement becoming an essential part of the schools and the curriculum.

ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE LEARNERS

Now that you have read about public policy and current issues affecting young children today, let’s look at one issue that has many policy implications as well as one about which many early childhood teachers have questions: inclusion, typically defined as educating children with and without disabilities in the same classroom. While the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have identified inclusion as the preferred service delivery option for young children with special needs, there is no agreed-on model for developing and delivering these services. A classroom template for inclusion is not available, but it is essential that teachers believe that preparing all children to function in society is best achieved by creating environments that include children with varying abilities and disabilities and backgrounds.

Once teachers support the philosophy of inclusion, they must be able to plan for and provide for the needs of the diverse children in their classroom. Creating a successful inclusive environment requires a well-planned and well-organized classroom. Teachers who plan and evaluate the different aspects of the classroom setting can construct classrooms that meet the needs of all students. You will gradually gain the skills, awareness, and disposition to do this. The following list provides some examples of ways to create, implement, evaluate, and modify classrooms so that optimal learning conditions are created for all students:

• Classroom schedule. A consistent schedule helps students feel secure and adds to the predictability of the environment. A visual schedule that is reviewed orally every day benefits all children. In addition, some students will need their own individual schedules, particularly if their day includes therapists who provide services for them.

• Routines. Routines for different times of the day and scheduling a particular activity at the same time every day or on the same day every week is beneficial for students who need the stability of knowing what their day will entail.

• Classroom curriculum. Classroom curriculum that is appropriate for all children does not mean each child will do the same things every day. The curriculum must include activities that can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of each child.
How to Help English Language Learners Succeed

My ongoing attempt to learn Spanish provides me with a lot of empathy for English language learners! Perhaps you have had the same experience that I have of frustration with comprehension, pronunciation, and understandable communication. English language learners (ELLs) face these same problems. Many come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Others come to this country lacking many of the early literacy and learning opportunities we take for granted.

INCREASING NUMBERS

Many school districts across the country have seen their numbers of ELLs skyrocket. For example, in 2013 the Texas Education Agency reported there were 838,000 ELLs in K–12 programs throughout the state. Over 120 languages were represented, 90 percent were Spanish speakers. Prominent languages other than Spanish were Korean, Vietnamese, Urdu, and Arabic.*

The chances are great that you will have ELLs in your classroom wherever you choose to teach.

DEVELOP CONTENT AROUND A THEME

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

- Provide a word wall or word bank for students to display the vocabulary associated with the theme being studied. Use pictures to explain vocabulary whenever possible.
- Provide a variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking experiences around the theme.

USE VISUAL AIDS AND HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES IN YOUR INSTRUCTION

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

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

USE ROUTINES TO REINFORCE LANGUAGE

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

- Use daily reading with pictures, gestures, and a dramatic voice to help convey meaning.
- Provide “scripts,” instructions for a set of actions, by tying language to content instead of simply trying to teach language in isolation. For example,
engage children in role play in which they act out common activities such as lining up or going to the cafeteria, recess, or the zoo. Teach useful language frames such as, “Can you help me find the bathroom?”

- Remember that there is a distinction between the language children use on the playground and academic language—the language they need to succeed with tasks they encounter in school. Teachers need to consciously and carefully scaffold academic language. For example, before you ask children to retell a story, teach words such as first, then, and after.

**Engage English Language Learners with English Speakers**

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

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

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

**Use Technology**

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

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

- English language development teacher Amanda Currey believes an array of technology helps engage students and provides the structured one-on-one English practice they need, and that software, online tools, and other technologies help students hone basic language skills they can later apply in authentic social settings. Amanda uses technology to mix things up, capture students’ attention, and engage them in a way traditional classroom instruction doesn’t.

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

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

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

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

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

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

• Transitions. Strategies that support smooth transitions between activities include verbal cues (e.g., “Five minutes before clean-up”); visual cues (e.g., picture schedules); auditory cues (e.g., timers); and praise after successful transitions.

Teachers who actively prepare for all students are better able to provide accommodations, support, and instruction where needed. Organizations such as DEC, CEC, and NAEYC are excellent sources for position papers, instructional resources, and other documents that will assist you with teaching in the inclusive classroom.

HOT TOPICS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Issues facing early childhood education today are many and varied and have considerable consequences, both positive and negative, for young children. The following “hot topics” are building across the profession.

• The globalization of early childhood education. Countries around the world are using early childhood education as a foundation by which to muscle their way into the top tier of world economic influence. Nowhere is this more evident than in Asia. Early childhood education has emerged as a tool of economic competitiveness.61 This helps explain, in part, why there is so much state and federal emphasis on universal preschool and other issues facing young children and their families.

• The politicization of early childhood education. There has been a dramatic increase in state and federal involvement in the education of young children, for reasons discussed above. President Obama and his administration have initiated numerous programs to provide funding to improve early education learning. Once again, early childhood, especially preschool, is in the political spotlight and will remain there for the next decade.
• **Emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).** Children need an education with a foundation in STEM areas so that they are prepared to both work and live in the twenty-first century. There is a particular emphasis on how to involve girls in the STEM areas and to interest them in careers in the sciences.

• **Alignment of the public schools and early childhood programs.** The alignment of public schools with early childhood programs is becoming increasingly popular. Some think it makes sense to put the responsibility for educating and caring for the nation’s children under the sponsorship of one agency—the public schools. For their part, public school teachers and the unions that represent them are anxious to bring early childhood programs within the structure of the public school system. However, a growing vocal minority views federal funding of preschool programs as a movement to “standardize childhood.” They argue that with federal funding comes federal control and a standardized one-size-fits-all approach to preschool education. This tension between local and federal funding and control of early childhood education will continue to give both sides opportunities to advocate for which approach they think best meets the needs of children and families.

It seems inevitable that the presence of public schools in early childhood education will continue to expand. Given that so many public schools offer programs for three- and four-year-olds, can public school programs for infants and toddlers be far behind?

• **The use of research results to inform and guide program and classroom practice.** Another name for this research emphasis is evidence-based or research-based practice. You can use research results as part of your advocacy agenda. For example, research that shows the benefits and lifelong value of children’s participation in early childhood programs enables you to advocate for additional high-quality programs. The application of research to practice is one of the hallmarks of the “new” early childhood education.

• **Whole-child education.** There is definitely a trend toward rethinking what is an appropriate education for all children. There has been a tendency, in many sectors, to look at education as consisting of primarily achievement as measured by test scores. Now, more people are coming to support what early childhood educators have always known and held dear: We must educate the whole child in all developmental dimensions—physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and spiritual!

• **Child-centered education.** This movement is closely aligned with the “whole child” movement. It is designed to make children the center of the educational process—not teachers, not the curriculum, not tests, but children. This seems like such an obvious idea, but unfortunately the public, and quite often the profession, loses sight of the fact that education is—and should be—about the children. Everything else should be designed to make their educational experience meaningful.

• **Children’s mental/social/emotional/behavioral health and well-being.** The Sandy Hook shooting, in which twenty children and six adults were killed, focused the nation’s attention once again on the role mental health plays in the decisions and actions of children and adults. Early childhood professionals are now focusing on how to support the positive mental health of infants and toddlers as the foundation for life-long positive mental health. You will be involved in programs and efforts to help prevent behaviors that lead to violence and criminal behavior.
• Universal preschool. President Obama’s call for universal preschool for the nation’s four- to five-year-old children is a game changer for early childhood education. Not only will more children than ever before enroll in preschool, but also the demand for preschool teachers will dramatically increase. I think the future of early childhood is being defined by how the nation responds to the president’s call for preschool funding.

• Highly effective teachers and teaching. A highly effective teaching force is essential for implementing the universal preschool initiative. This means that there will be more of a professional effort to recruit and educate high-quality teachers for the teaching profession. Colleges of education are in the process of revamping their teacher training programs to meet the demand for teachers who are highly qualified and who can help children achieve to the highest levels.

• Teaching English learners (ELLs). As the nation’s school population becomes more diverse, there is more demand for teachers who are willing and able to teach English learners. You will want to consider earning a bilingual certificate or endorsement along with your standard teaching certificate. Many colleges of education are making this possible for their students. At the same time, increasing numbers of school districts are demanding such training before they hire new teachers.

• Technology integration. The integration of technology into the teaching and learning process is a powerful theme running through all of education today, pre-K–12. Learning how to use technology to help children learn and how to involve children in the use of technology to ensure their learning is an essential teacher role today. You have no choice but to learn to confidently integrate technology into children’s learning.

This is a great time for early childhood education and a wonderful time to be a teacher of young children. The numerous changes in the field and the compelling issues that accompany them provide many opportunities for you to become even more professional and for all children to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for success in school and life.

ACTIVITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ETHICAL DILEMMA

“MY CHILD’S NOT DANGEROUS!”

Zachary Christie, a six-year-old, was suspended for forty-five days after he was found with a camping utensil that was ruled a weapon. Zachary got the camping utensil after joining Boy Scouts and was excited to use it at lunch, using it as a spoon, fork, and knife.

Local school districts’ zero tolerance policy restricts students from bringing weapons to school. Regardless of Zachary’s intent, school officials proclaimed that they had to penalize him because bringing knives to school is against school policy. There is a growing debate over whether or not zero tolerance policies have gone too far. Although Zachary may not have intended to harm anyone, administrators argue that it is hard to distinguish between pranks, innocent mistakes, and serious threats. To ensure the safety of all children they must adhere to strict rules. Zachary’s mom started a website to gain support and persuade others that “he is not some sort of threat to his classmates.” So, what do you think?

Do you think that the zero tolerance policies are too strict? Or, should administrators have the final say and make decisions on a case-by-case basis? Do you agree with the decision to suspend Zachary from school? What should Zachary’s mom do? What would you do with Zachary?
**ACTIVITIES TO APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED**

1. **KEY ASSESSMENT:** Academic achievement gaps between poor children and their middle- and upper-income classmates is a serious issue in early childhood today. Think about and identify three things you can do to help close achievement gaps in your classroom. Log on to Facebook and share with your classmates by creating an online blog. Ask for their ideas for how they would close the gaps. Take a look at the number of people that have viewed your blog and read their comments. What do their comments tell you? Use the **rubric** provided to guide your work.

2. Conduct an Internet search of school-based bully prevention programs and identify the best features. From these best features develop a PowerPoint presentation titled “Best Practices for Bully Prevention in Early Childhood Programs.” Ask your teacher if you can make a presentation to your class.

3. Many young children live in diverse families. Conduct online research about the challenges of providing for different types of families. Think about diverse families, the challenges families face, and what you can do as an early childhood professional to support contemporary families. Log on to Twitter and share with a small group of classmates your findings through Twitter’s online website.

4. How can you create and modify classrooms to accommodate diverse learners? Go online and find ways teachers in inclusive classrooms accommodate their diverse learners. Next, discuss your findings with classmates in a chat room. Finally, develop a list of ways you will support students with disabilities in your classroom.

5. Think about the hot topics discussed in this text. Which hot topic do you think is the most important? Why? Log on to Facebook and share your ideas by posting a note. Tag your classmates to get their feedback.

**LINKING TO LEARNING**

The following agencies and programs, which can be located easily online, provide additional information about topics discussed in this chapter.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**

*Presents the latest information on issues affecting America’s disadvantaged children; a friendly, newly updated resource.*

**Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**

*A national organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted.*

**The Division for Early Childhood (DEC)**

*A division of the Council for Exceptional Children that promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.*

**U.S. Department of Agriculture—Choose My Plate**

*Provides useful information on current nutrition guidelines, including MyPlate, which promotes a healthy diet.*

**Zero to Three**

*Promotes the healthy development of the nation’s infants and toddlers by supporting and strengthening families, communities, and those who work on their behalf.*

**USA Today—Ghost Factories**

*Collection of comprehensive investigative reports on contaminated soil and the effects of children’s play in these contaminated areas.*

**Child Welfare Information Gateway**

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

**Childhelp USA**

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

**Let’s Move**

*A national initiative founded and run by First Lady Michelle Obama to bring awareness and dramatic change to obesity within one generation.*