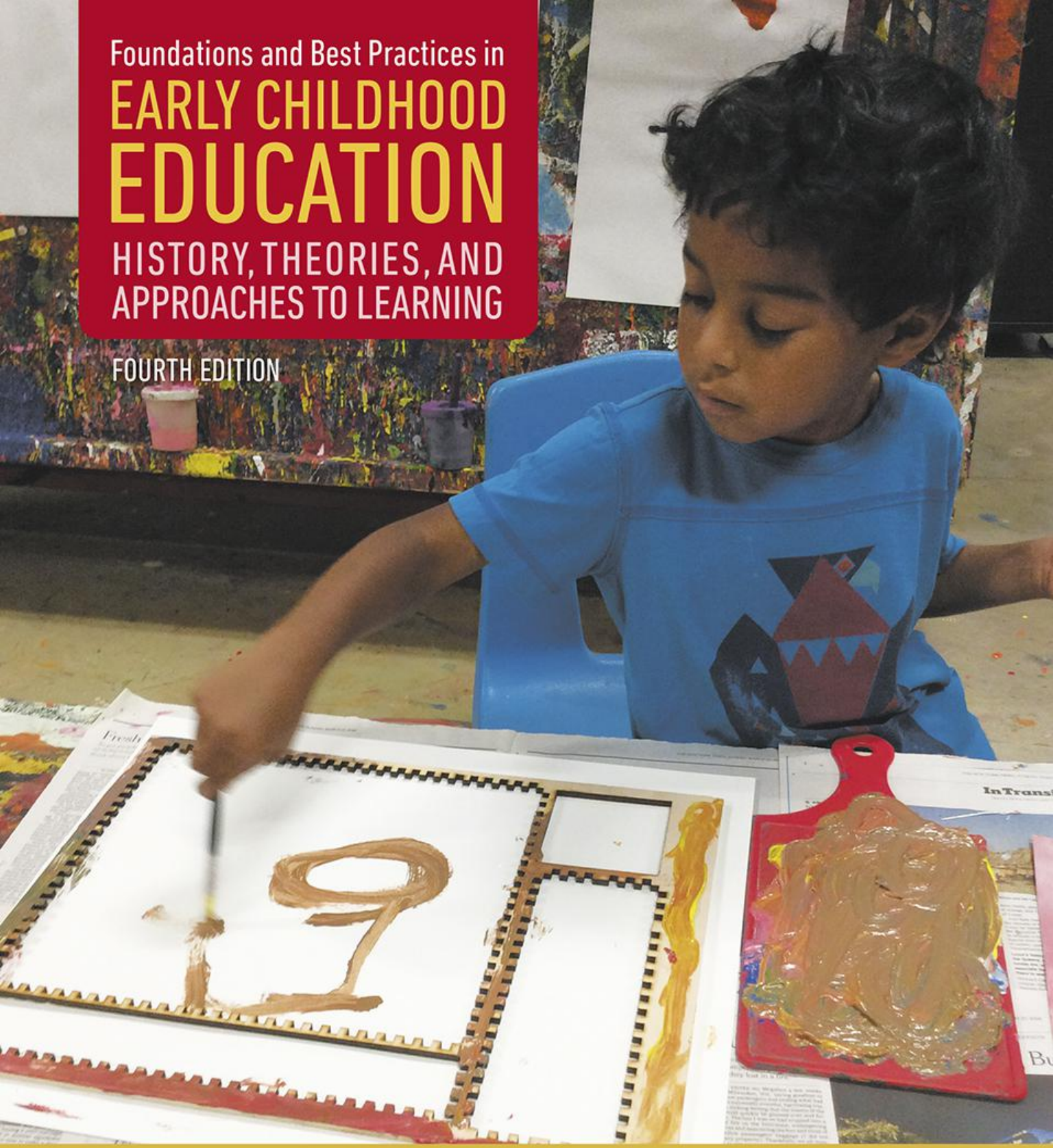
Foundations and Best Practices in

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

HISTORY, THEORIES, AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING

FOURTH EDITION



LISSANNA FOLLARI

Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education

This page intentionally left blank

Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education

HISTORY, THEORIES, AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Fourth Edition

Lissanna Follari
University of Colorado

Pearson
330 Hudson Street, NY NY 10013

Director and Publisher: Kevin Davis
Executive Portfolio Manager: Aileen Pogran
Managing Content Producer: Megan Moffo
Portfolio Management Assistants: Maria Feliberty and Casey Coriell
Development Editor: Krista McMurray
Executive Product Marketing Manager: Christopher Barry
Executive Field Marketing Manager: Krista Clark
Manufacturing Buyer: Carol Melville
Cover Design: Carie Keller, Cenveo
Cover Art: Lissanna Follari
Media Producer: Autumn Benson
Editorial Production and Composition Services: SPi Global, Inc.
Editorial Project Manager: Jessa May Dales, SPi Global, Inc.
Full-Service Project Manager: Prathiba.R, SPi Global Inc.
Text Font: Bembo MT Pro 11/13

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Follari, Lissanna M., author.
Title: Foundations and best practices in early childhood education : history, theories, and approaches to learning / Lissanna Follari.
Description: Fourth edition. | New York : Pearson, [2019]
Identifiers: LCCN 2017059083 | ISBN 9780134747989 (alk. paper) | ISBN 0134747984 (alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Early childhood education.
Classification: LCC LB1139.23 .F66 2019 | DDC 372.21—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017059083

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 10: 0-13-474798-4
ISBN 13: 978-0-13-474798-9

Preface

The field of early care and education has been growing and evolving for centuries. There is much to be learned from our past as we create a vision for our future. Even more valuable perspectives can be explored by examining the unique approaches and beliefs that shape current practices around the world. This text is an invitation to embark on a broad exploration of the scope, roles, and practices of working with and for children and families.

This text is written for beginning educators as well as for those with experience teaching young children who are furthering their education and professional development. For the beginning educator, this is an invitation to consider your place in this dynamic field by tracing its history and current trends. For the more experienced educator, this text can provide more in-depth explorations of specific methods and approaches to guide the ongoing process of professionalizing your practice. The overarching goal of this text is for professionals to make connections between beliefs and philosophies and their own practice. To do this, I have included many stories and extended vignettes, which come from a variety of classrooms and highlight how teachers and programs are integrating guiding principles and beliefs into applied practice. It is my hope that you will use this text to begin or continue a reflective journey on the evolving path of defining and reshaping practice with children and families. Go forth and find your voice—the voice you will raise in advocacy on behalf of all children and families.

New to This Edition

It has been well over a decade since the publication of the first edition of this text. Over these years and multiple revisions, *Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood* has become more and more applied, with lively and vivid descriptions of programs and practices threaded throughout each chapter. This fourth edition reflects the most recent changes in early care and education practice, illustrated by observation descriptions from programs around the United States in different community settings. New updates reflect legislative and policy changes as well as the latest research on effective practice. Throughout the text, content has been expanded to include even more emphasis on inclusive practices and family diversity. You will find important revisions and updates in the following areas:

- More graphic features include charts and graphs to present content in reader-friendly formats.

- Chapter 1: Expanded developmental snapshots of young children with more emphasis on infants and toddlers; new sections on social emotional learning and self-regulation.
- Chapter 2: Stronger connections to how historical roots influence today's practice; updated to include Race to the Top initiatives.
- Chapter 3: New content on Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
- Chapter 4: All new learning theories added to broaden readers' perspectives, including attachment, social learning, and neuroscience education theories and research.
- Chapter 5: Updated content throughout chapter.
- Chapters 6–11: Content reorganized, streamlined, and updated.
- Chapter 8: Enhanced content on inclusion.
- Chapter 10: New section on play and Montessori Education.
- Chapter 12: New sections on preschool expulsion and the opportunity (achievement) gap.

FEATURES OF THE TEXT

The **Classroom View** cases from the field included in most chapters provide a snapshot of diverse early care and education settings and illustrate the key concepts presented in the chapters. I invite you also to reflect on your own observations in light of these stories, comparing your experiences with those included here.

The **In Your Own Words** boxed features encourage you to reflect on specific aspects of your own beliefs and practice. We also pause frequently along this journey to think about specific suggested applications, which are highlighted in the **Putting It Into Practice** boxed features. These highly applied elements are essential features to help make the theory to practice leap that is so important for high quality practices.

Several themes run like threads throughout the text: teachers' roles, views of children, current practices in today's programs, inclusion, and diversity. These are key aspects of all practice that you, too, must integrate into your thinking and teaching. The reflection prompts, questions at the end of each chapter, and application activities are all designed to facilitate the development of your own beliefs and practices about these key themes. The new video segments, interactive quizzes, and expanded interactive video exercises provide readers with more opportunities to apply knowledge and deepen comprehension. The appendixes contain tools that can be used in this process, including samples of graphic organizers to facilitate content understanding and a comprehensive professional portfolio plan.

GUIDING CONCEPTS

Several concepts that guide this text are used as a lens through which we will view the field. First, this text takes a *child-centered approach* to early childhood education. Childhood is a unique and valued period of life, and children are capable, competent, and active participants in their growth and learning.

Another guiding concept is the belief, flowing from *constructivist* learning theory, that children are busily and actively building knowledge from their earliest moments through meaningful experiences and relationships with people and environments. Children continue this lively inner process even when they are quiet. Their learning, thinking, and feeling are expressed in myriad "languages," or ways of communicating. Teachers must be receptive and respectful of them all, giving children opportunities to explore and express themselves in many ways.

I strongly believe that teaching is a personal as well as a professional endeavor. Adults and children form social bonds and relationships that are at the heart of learning.

Above all else, I believe that children deserve to be respected and loved by the adults in their lives who joyfully and intentionally engage in this challenging, complex, and rewarding field. It is with this spirit of love and respect that I present this text to you and wish you a challenging, surprising, rewarding journey.

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION: PORTFOLIO AND FOCUS ON CORE CONTENT

In addition to the overarching themes, two aspects to help you in your professional preparation are woven throughout this book. In each chapter, you will be guided to activities that help shape your professional portfolio. Your portfolio is used to present a picture of who you are as a developing teacher and as a teacher education student. The other element woven throughout the text is an emphasis on core content aligning with teacher preparation exams, such as the Praxis™ Early Childhood tests. The foundations, key theories, and examples of best practices presented here represent a major part of the content of such exams.

ANCILLARIES ACCOMPANYING THIS TEXT

All ancillaries are available online. To download and print ancillary files, go to www.pearsonhighered.com and then click on Educators.

Instructor Resource Manual This manual contains a glossary handout, chapter overviews, additional Web resources, and additional application activities for in-class and out-of-class which are designed to enhance students' understanding of chapter concepts and build students' professional portfolios.

Online Test Bank The Test Bank includes a variety of test items, including multiple choice and essay items, organized by chapter and ready for use.

TestGen is a powerful test generator available exclusively from Pearson. You install TestGen on your personal computer (Windows or Macintosh) and create your own tests for classroom testing and for other specialized delivery options, such as over a local area network or on the web. It contains the same test items as the Online Test Bank. Using TestGen, assessments can be created for both print or testing online. The tests can be downloaded in the following formats:

TestGen Testbank file—PC

TestGen Testbank file—MAC

TestGen Testbank—Blackboard 9 TIF

TestGen Testbank—Blackboard CE/Vista (WebCT) TIF

Canvas Test Bank (zip)

D2L Test Bank (zip)

Moodle Test Bank

Sakai Test Bank (zip)

Online PowerPoint® Slides Colorful PowerPoint slides prompt student engagement with reflective questions, highlight key concepts and strategies in each chapter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to offer my heartfelt appreciation to all my students who are emerging or practicing teachers. It is for you that I undertook this project. I hope that the inspiration and collegiality we share in our classes continue to fuel your work as they do mine. It continues to be an honor to travel this road together. I wish you all a successful and nourishing journey.

I would like to thank Luci Coke for all her assistance in gathering the tremendous research that went into the first edition of this book and Julie Peters for her decade of insightful support and valuable feedback. This project is stronger for your caring involvement.

I am particularly grateful to all the dozens of classrooms, homes, centers, and schools that graciously allowed me to visit, observe, ask questions, dialogue, and joyfully engage in this process of gathering and sharing our professional stories. It is because of you all that this work, and the goals of continually improving practice for young children everywhere, are made possible.

I would like to thank the following reviewers for their helpful comments: Elizabeth Beschorner, Minnesota State University, Mankato; Teresa Bridger, Prince George's Community College; Christopher Meidl, Duquense University; and Kari Schamberger, Wor-Wic Community College.

A very special thank you also goes out to the dedicated teachers and families at the Northampton Community College Child Care Center, the East Stroudsburg University Child Care Center, the Sheridan, WY, YMCA Child Care Center, the Colby-Sawyer College Windy Hill Lab School, the E-11 Creative PlaySpace, Manitou Springs Elementary School, and the UCCS Family Development Center. The inspired, exemplary, joyful practice I have been fortunate enough to experience in each of these settings continues to fuel my passionate dedication to our field.

Finally, I lovingly dedicate this project to Greisan, the motivation behind it all.

Brief Contents

Part 1 Foundations

Part 2 Models and Approaches

Part 3 Beginning the Journey

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Welcome to the Field of Early Childhood Education

Lissanna Follari

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify key highlights of development and learning in children from birth to 8 years old.
- Explore the scope and features of early childhood education.
- Discuss the role and tasks of a teacher-education student.
- Describe the complex roles of early childhood teachers.
- Articulate important issues facing today's early childhood profession.
- Organize initial ideas about your professional identity.

Being an early childhood educator is a constant journey. It is exciting, challenging, tiring, invigorating, and always changing. Above all else, it is rewarding—there is no more influential period of life than the first eight years. Because of the tremendous leaps that occur in development during the early years, early childhood educators are positioned to have profound effect on children's lives. The role of the teacher of young children is, therefore, crucial to our future generations. As early childhood educators, we take on many different roles in the course of our days: teacher, researcher, lifelong learner, caregiver, family and child advocate, provocateur of children's thinking, playmate, problem-solver, and many others. We are called upon daily to face many daunting challenges and tasks. This chapter provides a broad definition of early childhood education (ECE), highlights

who young children are developmentally and as learners, and presents important trends and issues in current practice today. You will begin to reflect on how you see yourself as a professional as you consider your role in the lives of children and families.

WHO IS THE 'YOUNG CHILD'?

The period from birth through 8 years of age defines the term *young children* or the *early childhood years*. At no other phase of life do we undergo such radical, rapid, and significant changes. For the sheer developmental effect of this time, early childhood is considered the most significant and influential time of life. While there are always variations in the timing and sometimes in the sequence of young children's growth and development, copious research also demonstrates that there are predictable patterns, ranges, and trends, which are universal in typically developing children. Figures 1-1 through 1-4 provide an outline of typical development in infancy, toddlerhood, preschool, and early school ages, along with examples of learning processes and experiences found in quality early care and education settings.

Infants

Infancy is generally framed as the time from birth through the first year to 18 months, or roughly when children begin learning to walk. While some programs include a focus on pregnant mothers, (such as Early Head Start), early care and education in a home-based or center-based setting for infants usually begin around six weeks. Growing research in the area of early brain development (prenatal and infant), demonstrates the incredible pace of quantity and quality of changes to brain structure and functioning during this time (Edie & Schmid, 2007). The infant brain, which has 100 billion synapses at birth, creates new neural connections emerging from experiences, even before birth. The more experiences and sensations, the more volume and strength of connections. The brain is more active in creating new connections in the first few years of life than at any other time, and operates on a "use it or lose it" process. This means synaptic connections are either strengthened through repetition ("use it"), or pruned away to make brain functioning more efficient ("lose it"). Given this process, we know how essential it is for positive, enriching experiences to be a part of the young child's life from the very beginning. This also underscores the pivotal importance of the quality of caregiver relationships and interactions and variety of experiences in the infant's environment (Edie & Schmid, 2007; Marshall, 2011). Consistent routines, warm caregiver relationships, interactive language experiences, and opportunities to make discoveries through hands-on play and activities are all essential for early development.

Figure 1-1 provides a snapshot overview of major trends in infant development along with responsive caregiver practices.

Toddlers

As older infants begin to develop independent mobility, they move into toddlerhood, a time when a sense of self, autonomy in self-care and activities, and choice-making begin to blossom. Building on secure, trusted relationships with caregivers, toddlers'

FIGURE 1-1

Infant Typical Development and Learning

	How Children Develop and Learn in Infancy	What Learning Looks Like in Quality ECE	Examples of Infants' Learning Experiences
Infants (birth to 1.5 years)	• Infants **learn primarily through their senses and interactions** with adults and other children. • **Infants need to touch, see, taste, hear, and smell objects** to explore and learn about the qualities of materials in their world. • **Social exchanges** strengthen infants' brain connections and build language skills. • **Warm and responsive face-to-face interactions such as** rocking, holding, and gentle play develop relationships and stimulate infants' responsiveness. • Long before babies can speak fluently, they learn **social conversation conventions,** turn-taking, sounds and words, tone of voice, eye contact, nonverbal expressions, etc., through interactions with caregivers. • **Physical coordination** is a key task of this age group. • Infants **explore and start to control motor skills** such as reaching, grabbing, picking up items, sitting, crawling, and standing, and begin independent mobility.	• **Warm, loving, responsive interactions** are the key to early development and learning. Teachers talk, sing, read, and play with infants. • **Relationships** formed in infancy are the basis of lifelong healthful emotional development. • Caring adults focus on **sensitively responding to infants' needs.** • **Peer interactions** provide opportunities to learn about socialization, compromise, awareness of others, community, and sharing. • The primary ways infants learn are **play, self-selected explorations, language interactions, and manipulating varied materials.** • **Physical activities,** including music, dance, outdoor and indoor large- and small-motor actions, encourage coordination, mobility, and strength. • **Rhymes, songs, and talking with adults and friends** support the all-important emphasis on language development. • **Strong family partnerships** are essential in ECE.	• **Songs and stories during routines,** such as changing, feeding, and play • **Outdoor experiences,** including buggy or stroller rides, walks, and play in grassy areas • **Small pieces of climbing equipment** as infants become more mobile • Opportunities to **explore self and reflections in mirrors,** building self-awareness • Activities such as **filling and dumping items from bins, stacking cups, and building with soft or lightweight blocks** • Safe, **sensory materials** for infancy exploration, such as sand, water, and paint

exploration of their world broadens, along with expansions in language development. Toddlers engage in exploring their world with all of their senses, and eagerly absorb and repeat everything they see and hear in their environment (Korngold, C & Korngold, K, 2014). During the toddler months, gains in physical coordination and language proficiency are especially pronounced. Toddlers need opportunities to be active and take risks in safe settings designed especially for their emerging skills. Their confidence to try new tasks and expand their abilities is made possible by positive relationships with consistent caregivers in carefully designed environments.

Figure 1-2 provides a snapshot of toddler development and responsive caregiver practices.

FIGURE 1-2

Toddler Typical Development and Learning

	How Children Develop and Learn in Toddlerhood	What Learning Looks Like in Quality ECE	Examples of Infants' Learning Experiences
Toddlers (1.5–3 years)	• Key milestones are building on trusted **relationships and exerting autonomy.** • **Toddlers begin to explore and master self-care skills** (feeding, potty-training, hand-washing), and these achievements build a lifelong sense of self-competence and self-esteem. • **Physical coordination** and expanding abilities are further refined as toddlers learn to walk, run, kick a ball, balance, hold utensils, etc. • Toddlers love to **explore their world** and their growing physical capabilities. A toddler's day should be filled with active play. • Toddlers need opportunities to explore and experiment with classmates and children of varying ages to learn the **foundations of social skills** necessary to be successful learners and members of a community.	• **Toddlers learn through self-chosen activities and inquiry projects** designed to explore aspects of their world. • Toddlers are still **sensory, hands-on learners** and need to be actively *doing* to learn. • **Curiosity about the world around them,** inside and outside, sparks keen observation. • Toddlers have plenty of opportunities for **active play,** including climbing and large-motor games, **balanced with rest and quiet periods.** • Toddlers **strengthen self-care skills** through eating, dressing, and cleaning experiences. • Sharing **stories and books** helps build early language and literacy skills. • **Building with varied materials such as blocks** develops language, visual-spatial, math, social, and physical development. • **Small-group play in self-selected center areas** provides toddlers with opportunities to practice social negotiation and build awareness of others. • **Teachers and children develop strong relationships** through sensitive caregiving and meaningful interactions. • **Strong family partnerships** are essential in ECE.	• Projects **exploring how things work** through hands-on and sensory play • **Exploring perspective and reflection** with mirror, light, and shadow • **Noticing changes in their world** through outdoor observations and discovery • **Helping to care for materials, self, and environment** by putting items away, helping to clean up small messes, and hand-washing • **Family-style, relaxed, social meals** to promote nutrition and social skills • **Dramatic play** in authentic, themed center areas such as a kitchen, market, or post office • **Ample opportunity for construction** of real and imagined worlds with blocks, scarves, sticks, sand, etc. • **Daily language experiences** such as stories, book-sharing, poems, singing, puppets, and listening to music • **Climbing or large-motor equipment** in the inside and outside environments • **Counting and sorting materials** based on color, size, and shape to build early math concepts • **Exploring materials for creative expression,** including art, music, and drama, to learn about aesthetics and expression

Preschoolers

The preschool years are marked by an astounding burst of language development as well as marked growth in physical coordination and curiosity about the world and how things work. The autonomy and independence cultivated in the toddler years sets the stage for preschoolers to make choices about activities and interests and act on their decisions and plans. Preschoolers develop deeper social connections and skills in social negotiation and problem-solving. Friendships develop and afford opportunities for children to explore emotional interaction nuances and practice essential skills required for being a part of a group. The social-emotional development which occurs during the preschool years supports children's self-regulation, or their ability to control and manage their own emotions, behavior, and actions, and balance these with the situation or needs of others in the group. Competency in self-regulation has been connected to later educational success and school readiness, and is recognized as an essential positive outcome of healthy preschool years (Denham, Hideko, Zinsser, & Wyatt, 2014).

Figure 1-3 provides a snapshot overview of 3- to 5-year-olds' development along with key teacher practices.

Early Elementary

As children enter formal school settings in the early elementary years, social activities, peer relationships, and opportunities to create, imagine, and construct become especially interesting. Children's curiosity and natural desire to explore, test, observe, and understand their world consumes their focus in these years. Competence and self-esteem are supported and strengthened through developmentally aligned learning and social experiences.

FIGURE 1-3

Preschooler Typical Development and Learning

	How Children Develop and Learn in Preschool	What Learning Looks Like in Quality ECE	Examples of Preschoolers' Learning Experiences
Preschool (3–5 years)	• Preschoolers continue to **actively construct their knowledge about their world** through meaningful, authentic experiences. • **Preschoolers learn and develop through play** in all domains and learning areas. • **Play is active, hands-on, and child centered** with some teacher support and facilitation. • Short, **teacher-guided activities** can support focused learning goals in developmentally appropriate ways. • **Preschoolers are curious** about how things work, move, change, and grow. • **Emerging coordination and increasing focus** allow preschoolers to engage more deeply in hands-on activities that explore meaningful aspects of their world. • Preschoolers' **rich imagination and exploding language development** encourage increasingly detailed story-making, dramatic play, and constructions. • **Social interactions and peer relationships** are important to preschoolers and are essential for developing negotiation, compromise, and awareness of others.	• Preschoolers' days are balanced among **active play (indoors and outdoors), hands-on, inquiry-based projects, guided activities, rest, and routines.** • **Dramatic play** centers, such as a restaurant, supermarket, kitchen, post office, and doctor's office, support socialization and give toddlers an opportunity to think about their world. • **Child-guided projects** encourage skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success as lifelong learners, including problem-solving, academic skills, content knowledge, curiosity, initiation, choice-making, and persistence. • **Preschoolers practice and play with language** and develop increasingly complex language knowledge and skills and emergent writing and reading skills. • **Daily routines are organized, predictable, flexible,** and responsive to children's dynamic interests and needs. • **Teachers interact sensitively and responsively** to children, promoting initiative and providing individually tailored challenge and support. • **Teachers systematically assess children's development and learning** and use assessments to plan for each child. • **Documentation of children's development and learning** is used as evidence and to prompt reflection and dialogue with children and families. • **Strong family partnerships** are essential in ECE.	• **Play,** individually or in small social groups, with a variety of hands-on materials • **Plentiful language activities,** including stories, dramatic play, songs, and rhymes • **Refinement of small-muscle coordination** and utensil grasping through art experiences, cutting paper, writing, and eating • **Manipulating hands-on materials** exploring shape, color, weight, height, seriation, sequence, pattern, and order • **Exploring the world as scientists:** wondering, guessing, testing, observing, and reflecting • **Building with blocks** to test, think about, and represent ideas about their world • Exploring roles and social rules through **dramatic play** • **Language throughout the day** with reading and storytelling, dictating or acting out favorite or original stories, songs, and dialogues, emergent writing and reading, illustrating

Figure 1-4 provides an overview of development for 5- to 8-year-olds along with effective teacher practices.

We base all of our work with young children on a foundation of knowledge of child development. This is the starting place for all the myriad of decisions we make for and about children. The previous section is but a brief primer highlighting some of the key milestones and processes in young children's development and experiences.

FIGURE 1-4

Early Elementary Typical Development and Learning

	How Children Develop and Learn in the Early School Years	What Learning Looks Like in Quality ECE	Examples of Learning Experiences Among Kindergartners through Third-Graders
Early Elementary (5-8 years)	• **They actively construct their knowledge of the world,** self, and others through direct experience and dialogues. • **Growing awareness needs and interests in self and others** prompt interest in social interaction and belonging. • **They have increasing focus and attention** when interested, confident, and motivated. • **Coordination of large and small muscles** promotes complex active play. • **They enjoy games** with rules and making up own rules as a form of problem-solving. • **Social interaction** strengthens self-regulation, sense of belonging, and friendships. • **Literacy (and numeracy)** skills strengthen toward conventional literacy.	• **Organized routines with flexibility** focus around children's interests and needs. • **Individual, small- and large-group experiences** balance child-guided activities with adult-guided activities. • Children take increasingly active roles in **initiating and carrying out plans.** • **Dramatic play** becomes increasingly complex and longer and includes more interactions among peers. • **Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are used frequently;** skills continue to refine and develop toward conventional literacy. • **Content area knowledge and skills** increase in competence and focus. • **Teachers systematically assess children's development and learning** and use assessments to plan for each child. • **Documentation of children's development and learning** is used as evidence and to prompt reflection and dialogue with children and families. • **Strong family partnerships** are essential in ECE.	• **Problem-solving** using math, logic, and science knowledge and skills • **Group projects** designed to promote problem-solving, social negotiation, and self-regulation • **Story dramas** where children script and act out familiar stories and books • **Writing** activities, creating stories, journals, reports, illustrations, dialogue circles • **Reading** in groups and independently • **Constructing representations** of ideas, solutions, re-creations • **Games with rules,** including cards, board games, physical games

Lissanna Follari

In toddlerhood, teachers support children's autonomy by giving children just enough help without doing tasks for them.

Educator professional preparation also includes a far more comprehensive exploration and review of important theories, theorists, and milestones.

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to systems of education and care for young children from birth through 8 years old by people other than family members in settings outside of the child's home. Early childhood settings are diverse, including large or small center-based programs, in-home or out-of-home family care, faith-based programs, intervention programs, in-school preschool programs, corporate-sponsored programs, franchised program models, and public or private early elementary programs. Early childhood care and education professionals are described by a number of terms, including educators, teachers, assistant teachers, childcare providers, aides, or caregivers. Professional titles may represent differences in program focus and roles, though some titles are used interchangeably. There is wide variety in the scope, structure, implementation, and programming among early childhood programs serving infants, preschoolers, and early-elementary-age children and their families.

Early childhood education

Early childhood education refers to systems of care and education for children from birth through 8 years old.

The children and adults in these settings also bring vast diversity to the programs in terms of ability, interests, culture, values, languages, professional preparation, and so on. It is vitally important to develop sensitivity to diversity, attitudes, and skills to celebrate all members of a group. In any setting, relationships are the heart of education. Teaching and learning occur in a social context, in which we continually negotiate a complex system of relationships (schools, families, colleagues, beliefs, practices, communities). Teachers are required to make a myriad of decisions in selecting the most appropriate tools and methods from an astounding array of choices (technologies, ideologies, theories, and materials). Teachers also use those decisions to carefully create learning environments that plan for universal norms and also validate and support individual development and choices based on their particular setting. Within infant and toddler programs, it is essential to focus on nurturing relationships to strengthen social-emotional development and active exploration. In preschool-age programs, important elements include supporting children's increasing curiosity and interactive exploration. For early elementary settings, activities that deepen children's learning and support peer interactions are developmentally important. Teaching also increasingly involves assessment and accountability to internal and external audiences. To be successful, professionals are required to have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills, as well as dedication and commitment.

Scenes From the Field

Snapshots of Diverse Practice

There is wide variety across the span of early childhood practice as we consider the differences in program scope and structure when serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or early-school-age children. Even greater variations exist among diverse settings such as urban schools, rural programs, suburban centers, programs in religious institutions, and schools operated by Native American tribes or Alaskan Native villages. Just as with all early childhood practice, there are common threads along with vast and rich differences based on community setting and program scope.

Carlos oversees programs for infants and toddlers in 14 rural community centers with up to 100 miles between centers. "My programs are all funded with federal grant money designed to serve children from families living in poverty," Carlos said. "Enriching care and education are our program goals, but meeting basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, and stable home environments have to be our first priority. Accessing services and focusing on family support and parent education are central to our workday. Nothing else can happen for our children without their basic needs being met."

Noa teaches preschool in a faith-based program in an affluent urban community. "My families are all highly involved," Noa said. "I'm lucky because some

of my old college friends teaching in other places struggle to make connections to families. I'm lucky . . . but I also feel a lot of pressure too. My families have super high expectations of me and their children. Sometimes I worry about all the pressure on them. I just try to be true to my beliefs about children's development while also showing families just how much their kids are doing, and especially how this time is laying foundations for later learning. They especially want to see a lot of technology. It's a lot to manage, but I feel good about the positive impact I have on my kids. And because there is so much interaction with families and we do a lot of documentation, I know that we're working as partners and that they'll let me know if they have questions or problems."

Elise is a second-grade teacher in a suburban school. "Over the last five years or so, I've really seen a shift in our work," Elise said. "We really focus on competencies and evidence now. Yeah, it's about testing, but really our district pushes evidence-based practices and lots of kinds of assessments. My team [of second-grade teachers] meets weekly to plan and review the students' assessments and use that as a basis for planning instruction. We are constantly implementing and evaluating what we're doing with each student. Every new plan has to include a rationale stating what evidence we're basing the plan on. Then we also have to write out what evidence we'll collect to use for the next phase of planning. It sounds like a lot, but now that we're in the habit, we just use evidence for everything we do. At first it was harder, but now it actually makes sense."

YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER-EDUCATION STUDENT: CONSIDERING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Your task at this point in your professional development is to embrace a reflective perspective. You must learn about the history of this field to be able to envision the future, and you must explore a variety of practices to be able to cultivate your own style. Through your studies and work, you will learn from the past and present, from sound research, from children, from families, from colleagues, and from yourself as you develop your professional identity. The topics in this text provide a foundation from which you can start to build your own teacher identity. Throughout this book and during your teacher-education studies in general, you will be called upon to create a body of work that represents your beliefs and abilities as an educator. Creating a **professional portfolio** is your first (and an ongoing) effort to define and redefine yourself as an educator.

Professional portfolio
An organized collection of work that reflects your beliefs, experiences, and competencies as a teacher.

A portfolio is a collection of work, or artifacts, which represent you: your beliefs, your abilities, your goals, and your accomplishments. It will change throughout your studies and practice, and portfolios have different purposes, which drive design decisions. A progress portfolio is used to demonstrate your growth toward meeting expectations, and can include work samples and artifacts of progressively improved quality or proficiency. Many teacher-preparation programs engage students in completing a progress portfolio throughout their program. A performance portfolio, such as the

professional portfolio, is intended to be a showcase and demonstration of your highest level of proficiencies. This is a collection of your best work, in essence, "putting your best foot forward." When your purpose is to show how far you have come in your development and practice, you would use a progress portfolio. When your purpose is to show how capable and accomplished you are at a given time, such as in job-seeking, you would use your professional or performance portfolio. Portfolios are also used by teachers in engaging children in reflection on learning, and when assessing with children's learning and development.

Many people choose a binder, an expanding folio, or some other material that will allow artifacts to be added or withdrawn. Many college or university teacher preparation programs integrate a digital or online portfolio system, which allows you to share your portfolio digitally. An added benefit of a digital or website portfolio is that it demonstrates your technology skills to prospective school employers, many of whom will expect teachers to maintain a classroom website, blog, or application presence to communicate with families. Visit the Edutopia website and search for "digital teaching portfolios" to find excellent blogs and videos to walk you through the process of creating a digital teaching portfolio.

You must carefully and thoughtfully select items that reflect your progress, highlight your experiences, and demonstrate your abilities related to state and national teaching standards (Gelfer, Xu, & Perkins, 2004). Your portfolio may be used to assess your progress in your studies, to demonstrate your competencies in interviews, and to document your professional development throughout your career. Periodically reflecting on your portfolio in presentations or interviews will prompt you to summarize your work, learn from your experiences, and articulate who you are or will be as a teacher (Bullock & Hawk, 2001). Throughout this book, you will have opportunities to explore options and strategies for creating artifacts for your portfolio.

As an education professional, it is important to reflect on a variety of learning theories and teaching methods and critically examine how they can inform your own practice. As you read on, continue thinking about general and specific elements presented in each chapter. Find elements that you can envision integrating into your own unique philosophy and practice. Critically examine your own beliefs and potential biases in light of your readings and discussions. Reflect, adapt, and allow yourself to change your beliefs and expectations of teaching, children, and families as you learn about historic and current educational theories and practices. This ongoing process of exploring research and practice while examining your own beliefs is an essential part of becoming a reflective practitioner.

ROLES OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL

As you travel through the history, theories, guiding frameworks, and approaches presented in this book, you will delve further into the many roles embodied by early childhood teachers. Each one of us brings a unique set of motivations and visions about working with children and families. Your vision and professional personality will grow and change as you learn and experience new and varied professional settings.

Putting It Into Practice

Your Professional Portfolio

Consider aligning your portfolio around widely accepted standards such as those from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2011) or the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) (CCSSO, 2011). The headings for each standard, including examples of possible artifacts to include, are as follows (artifacts are described throughout the text):

NAEYC Standards for Initial Early Childhood Professional Preparation

Standard	Possible Artifacts
Standard 1: Promoting Child Development and Learning	• analysis of metaphors describing children • statement of beliefs about teaching and learning • brochure highlighting development in each domain • theorist studies
Standard 2: Building Family and Community Relationships	• family workshop outline • family brochure or newsletter • family survey • community needs survey • community resource list/brochure
Standard 3: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families	• observation reports • program comparison report • assessment tools • rubrics and checklists created to evaluate classroom environments and children's progress • child study
Standard 4: Using Developmentally Effective Approaches	• technology-integrated lesson plans • review of journals or self-evaluations • learning center designs • planning webs and charts • photo documentation panels • multiple intelligence self-test and response • field supervisor evaluation reports • analysis of assistive technology resources
Standard 5: Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum	• content-area lesson plans • planning webs and charts • content-focused games and materials
Standard 6: Becoming a Professional	• NAEYC membership • NAEYC position statements review • journal article reviews • conference attendance records • teacher interview report, including questions on law and policies affecting families and children • peer coaching report and self-reflection

Standard	Possible Artifacts
Standard 7: Early Childhood Field Experiences	• comparative paper from observations in two different early childhood settings • selections from practicum or field experience journal • lesson plan reflections • field supervisor evaluation reports

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards

Standard	Possible Artifacts
Standard 1: Learner Development	• analysis of metaphors describing children • statement of beliefs about teaching and learning • brochure highlighting development in each domain
Standard 2: Learning Differences	• statement on diversity in education • analysis of inclusive learning setting • individualized learning plan
Standard 3: Learning Environments	• classroom floor plan • learning center design plan • outdoor learning environment plan
Standard 4: Content Knowledge	• content-area lesson plans • content-focused games and materials
Standard 5: Application of Content	• integrated project planning webs and charts • team-teaching plans integrating multiple content areas • documentation panels illustrating student learning • field supervisor evaluation reports
Standard 6: Assessment	• observation reports • program comparison reports • assessment tools • rubrics and checklists created to evaluate classroom environments and children's progress • child study
Standard 7: Planning for Instruction	• integrated lesson plans • differentiated lesson plans • individualized plans
Standard 8: Instructional Strategies	• lesson plan reflections • video/photo of lesson plan implementation • artifacts of student work with reflection on instruction • teacher interview • field supervisor evaluations
Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice	• reflections on own practice (journals, postlesson plan reflections) • peer coaching reports with self-reflection • family survey • teacher interview

Standard	Possible Artifacts
Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration	• professional association membership • conference attendance records • school community event participation

Use tabs or dividers to create separate sections for each standard, including a section for personal data such as a résumé, educational philosophy, reference letters, licensure test scores such as Praxis, and transcripts. In the standards sections, you can begin to include class assignments such as papers, teaching lessons or units, family newsletters, and any field experiences, including any observation reports or evaluations that fit within the standard topic. As an introduction to each section, consider writing a one-page self-reflection analysis in which you describe any of your experiences that helped prepare you for that standard. This summary and the reflection statement demonstrate not only your writing skills but also your knowledge of standards and your self-awareness.

Teacher

Your role as a teacher may seem the most clear to you, and is embodied in the following activities:

- Facilitating children's development
- Valuing children's play as being important to their development as well as intrinsically enjoyable
- Creating beautiful and engaging learning environments that welcome every child
- Providing learning experiences that pique children's curiosity and spark their imaginations
- Asking questions that encourage children to think and sometimes challenge their thinking
- Observing and documenting children's actions and words to assess their learning and development
- Building strong relationships with children and families
- Being a learner alongside children as coconstructors of curriculum, knowledge, and classroom community

The meaningful, interesting, and challenging learning experiences you design should also integrate all areas of development and balance both child-initiated activities and more structured, teacher-guided activities. Every skillful teacher must find balance among developmental domains, structure of activity, context, and group or individual time. In each of the approaches we discuss in this book, you will see how teachers manage this important task.

Good teaching is built on a solid understanding of developmental theories, which include universal expectations and awareness of individual differences (Bredekamp

& Copple, 2009). Teachers understand that learning environments are designed to facilitate growth in all developmental domains. **Developmental domains** include the following:

Developmental domains

The major areas of human development: physical, cognitive, and social-emotional.

- Physical development: small-motor skills (picking up, pinching); large-motor skills (walking, skipping), balance, coordination, and general control of movement
- Social-emotional development: getting along with others; understanding, regulating, and expressing feelings; developing moral and ethical beliefs; becoming independent and able to work within a group; sense of self
- Cognitive development: thought process, language, intellectual skills, creativity, and problem-solving

Teachers need to be aware of the paths that children's development generally take so learning experiences may be planned to enhance that development. For example, infants begin to refine their physical control by lifting their heads then sitting up and eventually progress, as toddlers and preschoolers, to walking and running. Development in all domains generally follows predictable sequences, though also with great individual variety and pace (Allen & Marotz, 2003). Educators in today's diverse and inclusive educational settings must use foundational knowledge of child development while always recognizing and valuing each child as an individual, each with strengths and unique areas of challenge. Each child has a unique repertoire of styles, skills, abilities, strengths, preferences, and needs, and it is every teacher's primary responsibility to ensure that care and learning experiences validate and support every child.

Lissanna Follari

A primary role of the early childhood professional is working directly with children on hands-on activities.

Although some skills may be categorized within one domain, development should always be viewed as integrated and interrelated. That means that competencies and abilities within each domain affect and are influenced by other domains. For example, learning to walk can be categorized within physical development but is also affected by the infant's social interactions through encouragement, models, and support. In fact, nearly any developmental milestone you can think of is probably related to the child's environment just as much

as to the child's internal drive. Children should be viewed holistically and contextually as whole people living and growing among a range of influences in their unique family and community contexts (Noddings, 2005).

While developmental theories remain an important foundation for teaching, teachers must also become careful observers of individual children and classroom dynamics. For example, teachers often overhear children in dramatic play remarking that two girls or two boys cannot participate in a dramatic play wedding sequence because only boys and girls can marry. Or teachers may notice some children excluding other children of different ethnic backgrounds. Teachers often see preferences in terms of sex as well; boys may gravitate toward certain materials that girls do not play with. On the surface, these may seem like typical behaviors. When these scenes are viewed more critically, however, insights into gender biases, stereotypes, or dominant culture can be revealed. Reflective teachers must become aware of these more complex realities of the early childhood classroom (Ryan & Greishaber, 2004). Children's play is highly complex and a critically important window into their lives and development.

Something that may be a less obvious facet of the role of the teacher is that although teaching is highly complex, demanding, professional work, it is also deeply personal. You must love and enjoy what you do; children deserve to be loved, just as they deserve to be respected and valued. Genuine enthusiasm and caring will make you a truly inspiring educator. And this emotional investment and reward is helpful in sustaining you through a career in this demanding profession. Your personal commitment and the joy you bring to your teaching can ensure that you will continue to find satisfaction and nourishment in your work. At any age, students need to feel that their teachers care about teaching, about their learning, and—most of all—about them as people (Noddings, 1995). With young children, a loving bond formed with teachers is important for healthful emotional development as well as healthful brain development, especially in infancy (Baker & Manfredi/Petitt, 2004). You may spend long hours with children, sometimes even more waking hours than children spend with their families. It is natural and meaningful that close bonds are formed.

Scenes From the Field

Valuing Extended Families

Soon after I started directing a medium-sized center in a diverse community, a Korean family enrolled their 2-year-old son, Jae, in our program. The parents spoke English, but Jae and his grandmother did not. In an effort to ease Jae's transition to a new country, culture, language, and school, his grandmother came to school each day. At first, the teacher tolerated her presence, although she was not particularly pleased with the situation. Whereas her goals for the children included fostering increasing independence, Jae was held on his grandmother's lap and spoon-fed at meals, spoke in Korean to her and did not speak to other children, and played with her during choice time. The teacher worried that he would not achieve the same goals as the other children.

She made several failed efforts to encourage the grandmother to let Jae reach out and communicate with the teacher and other children. Finally, she requested a meeting with the parents and asked them to not allow the grandmother to come to the school. They agreed and she stayed home, but we felt their hurt and reluctance. Jae remained withdrawn and appeared uncomfortable but slowly learned some familiar words in English.

One evening when Jae's mother came to pick him up, I asked her to talk to me about their family life. She shared with me that, in her family, a grandmother has a very important place as the child's care provider when the parents are working. She talked about how close bonds between them are highly valued in their culture and said that the caretaking of their young children is an important family goal. As she spoke, I began to realize just how much we had hurt the grandmother personally by denying her role as Jae's caretaker and also how disrespectful we had been to the family's culture. I shared my sincere appreciation with her for helping me learn this lesson and assured her that we would make efforts to support the family as a whole.

The teacher and I met several times and talked about how we could do things differently to value both the home culture and the shared goals of developing linguistic and social independence for Jae. We invited his grandmother in three times a week to share in social times, help all of us learn familiar words in Korean, and share stories. Immediately the other children took a new interest in her and Jae, and soon we had learned several new words. Both the teacher and I were amazed at how quickly both the grandmother and Jae learned more English, and we could see the sense of pride in how the class really wanted to learn more about their language and culture. Both Jae and his grandmother became valued, appreciated members of the class. And the teacher and I learned an important lesson about not making assumptions about goals and values.

Keep in mind that children's attachments are not exclusive. They form personal bonds with any caring, responsive adults who spend long periods of time with them. This is a normal and healthy response, one that actually strengthens the parent-child bond (Baker & Manfredi/Petitt, 2004). Also keep in mind that your role as a teacher is to form close connections to families. Let families know that you both share the same goal: to provide the best environment possible for their children. Reassure them that your relationship with their children supports each child's development as well as the family as a whole. When families and teachers know they are working together, everyone's satisfaction improves. Amid all the work you do as a professional, never lose sight of the fact that teaching is personal. Remember that the heart of this work is about relationships. This includes relationships with both children and families (extended families too).

A meaningful way to form close bonds with children can be through their play. Play has been valued throughout our history and across international practice as the primary vehicle for children's learning and socialization (Fraser, 2007; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). In particular, teachers need to preserve children's right to engage deeply in child-initiated play and recognize not only the intrinsic joy but also the power of play to support learning and development (Jenkinson, 2001). Children's play is often highly complex and varied; something that is sometimes underestimated when observing children's play. "Different types of play . . . help young children develop a wide array of social-emotional, linguistic, cognitive, and physical knowledge and skills. The more complex the play, the greater the opportunity for children to develop and express their growing understanding of the world" (Gainsely, 2008, p. 1). Although we may strive to make teacher-guided learning fun (a common theme among my students' professional philosophy statements), we must also hold fast to children's right to time and space for play in their lives. The spontaneous, imaginative self-created and cocreated worlds that emerge in their play serve to nourish them in body, mind, and spirit and give them opportunities to create social bonds in a way that cannot be achieved as meaningfully through other adult-controlled activities. This nourishment is essential to children's development and a natural and valuable part of early childhood programs.

Lissanna Follari

Communication with families happens in both formal and informal ways every day.

Researcher

Throughout this book, you will read about the various theorists' views of the teacher as a researcher. For as long as there have been teachers, educators

have been advocating and practicing their role as researchers. And in our current moment, the call to implement strategies with clear evidence of effectiveness is at the forefront of our professional commitments (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). In practice, this means critically observing your children, your own teaching, and others' practice through a reflective lens to continually assess the effect and efficacy of your work in the lives of children and families.

- Explore innovations and seek evidence of effectiveness.
- Learn from others' work by observing and reading journals, joining informal discussions, and attending conferences.
- Stay current with what other professionals are doing.
- Approach your own work in your own classroom with an inquiry stance—question, try, watch, reflect, and try again.

In the spirit of our field's great pioneers, take every opportunity you can to observe children and reflect on what you see. Everything we know about children has come from the willingness of researchers to observe children and analyze what they do. Learn about your children from your analyses of their actions, behaviors, and conversations. If you experience tough days in the classroom, approach these as challenges to be investigated; there are vast resources for working through various classroom situations, including your colleagues, the faculty, books, and Web sites. Take suggestions from all the sources you can find, and try them out in your work. Not all the ideas you learn about will be the right fit for you, your children, or your families, but embrace the try-and-reflect process. There is no end to what you can learn through research, observation, and reflection throughout your career. As a researcher, you not only become a better educator, you also open yourself to being a lifelong learner.

Lifelong Learner

Although your tenure as a student may officially end when you receive your degree, certification, certificate, grade, or course completion, your role as a learner never ends. At times, books, lectures, discussions, and projects may be your education. As you embark into the professional world, experience, collaboration, observation, and reflection become your education. Just as you hope to instill in your children an enthusiasm, curiosity, inquisitiveness, and desire to learn, so you, too, must cultivate these qualities. One of the most motivational aspects of teacher-education programs—and your work thereafter—is the chance to learn by seeing and doing. Cultivate a habit of seeing the potential for growth, learning, and development all around you. Look to your own hobbies and interests for inspiration in your teaching. Share your personal interests with your children. Engaging educators also seek to integrate children's personal interests into the classroom. Continue to expand your teaching by widening your own interests, skills, and knowledge. Try new things; visit new places. Remember that who you are as a person is how you teach.

As you gain experience in professional settings, you will find new ideas, practices, and strategies as you go forward. Each time you begin working with a new child, family, or group, it will bring with it new joys and challenges. Each child will bring a unique set of skills, perspectives, and experiences; as a professional, you will need to learn all you can about each child and adjust your practice to support their development and learning. In this way, you will be constantly learning and growing as a professional and constantly searching for new ideas, strategies, and supports. Knowing that this is all a part of our work allows you to see this continual growth as an exciting aspect to our work.

Child and Family Advocate

Overarching everything teachers do is the guiding principle that we are advocates for children and families. We respect them. We believe in them. We want to empower them to succeed. We strive to foster healthful growth as individuals and as a family unit with unique and shared culture, beliefs, and goals. The day-to-day practice of working with young children further demands a heightened sensitivity to the unique qualities of childhood. Since experiences in the early years can greatly affect later developmental outcomes, we must put care and forethought into each decision we make on behalf of our children. Infancy and childhood are periods of particular vulnerability, reminding us that the nature of our behavior affects children and families in many ways. This realization, perhaps more than any other, endows teachers with a tremendous responsibility to hold themselves to the highest standards of professional demeanor and ethical behavior.

Our work and influence stretch far beyond the classroom walls and the end of the school day or school year. As teachers, we have an effect on children's lives, and they have an effect on ours. We have a voice in forums where children do not. It is your role to advocate on their behalf in larger public forums through participation in community groups, professional organizations, and other networks. Being an advocate for children means that you must understand public policies affecting children and families. It also means that you may be called upon to help shape those policies in ways that recognize the diversity of today's families and ensure a positive effect on all children and families (Jalongo et al., 2004).

The view of the "family" as strictly a nuclear unit consisting of a mother, a father, and child(ren) has expanded. Many children live with single parents, extended families, blended families, and nontraditional family members. These may include grandparents, aunts and uncles, other relatives, stepfamily members, partners, or other people who share the child's life. Some children also live with foster families or appointed guardians who become the child's family. Keep in mind that all of the people in children's lives influence them and are valued members of their world. It is also important to consider that different generations, just like different cultures, may have different styles and roles in children's lives. The emphasis on teaching as relationship building encompasses all the influences that create a child's unique world. Appreciate the vast potential for learning and development provided by children's families. Working together will make your experience richer and provide great opportunities to enhance everyone's learning.

Big Ideas in Today's Early Childhood Practice

The field of early childhood education is dynamic and evolving, as a review of our history will reveal. Many issues that early theorists wrestled with decades ago still remain topical today. In addition, there are new and complex issues that teachers face and guide our practice. Changes abound all around us: social, political, technological, and demographic. As our world becomes increasingly more complex, diverse, and global, teachers' responsibility to educate children capable of navigating this complex world becomes even more urgent. The major themes at the forefront of present-day practice include

- Programming and advocating for care and education of young children that is meaningfully aligned with children's development and unique family culture
- Recognizing, valuing, and responding to the increasing diversity within classrooms and communities
- Promoting **inclusive classrooms**, where diverse learners and abilities are equitably supported, challenged, and appreciated
- Integrating appropriate and comprehensive learning standards and providing evidence of assessing and evaluating accountability for children's achievement of these standards
- Systematically engaging in and using assessment evidence to guide decision-making

Inclusive classrooms
Classrooms that meaningfully integrate all children, including those with and without disabilities.

Active Learners Need Interactive Teachers

Young children are naturally active, social, exploratory beings and generally seek out opportunities to manipulate objects in their world. They are often so engrossed in their own explorations that they do not attend to classroom schedules, lengthy lectures, or sometimes even peers' feelings. When children have something to say or something they want to do, their natural inclination is to satisfy their desires. Young children's brains are actively making connections and building networks of knowledge from experiences. What may seem like a lack of awareness of other people's needs or a self-centered way of being is often more about the child's excitement at the connections between their thinking and experiences. There is a joyfulness and eagerness in young children, which emerges naturally from the stimulating world around them. These are wonderful qualities of the active mind and exploratory nature of young children.

Young children in group settings are unique individuals, and they are also a part of a group community. Within a group setting, there naturally are boundaries and social expectations, which are important for the effective functioning of the group. To support this, it is a common goal of early childhood teachers to instill some sense of order and awareness of rules and routines in a classroom. Within this goal, professionals support children's increasing **self-regulation**. Self-regulation refers to children's ability to monitor and manage their thinking, emotions, and behavior. Effective self-regulation

Self-Regulation
Self-regulation refers to a child's ability to sense internal changes in his or her attention, arousal, or emotions, and adjust his or her actions and behaviors to meet expectations.

is widely considered as essential for success in school, work, and life (Florez, 2011; Galinksy, 2010). Effective self-regulation develops within the first five years, and is most successfully developed through support and guidance within natural settings and within the scope of natural daily routines. Care givers can create environments which support children's developing awareness of their internal states (attention, arousal, emotions, thoughts), and guide children to use appropriate strategies to manage these. Teachers use strategies like flexible seating, movement breaks, varied learning experiences, active use of hands-on materials, and predictable routines. The following are examples of self-regulation skills we can see developing in children:

- Waiting for a turn with a desired material
- Taking a deep breath, sucking a thumb, clenching muscles, or changing gaze to self-calm when frustrated
- Expressing feelings of frustration or anger by talking instead of using physical action
- Following directions and attending to task requests
- Temporarily postponing having needs met to accommodate caregiver availability
- Planning ahead for tasks, transitions, or routines
- Persisting in challenging tasks, managing setbacks
- Modifying attention or arousal to suit constraints and opportunities within tasks or activities
- Working cooperatively and collaboratively with others

Another important goal of early childhood is to increase children's attention on learning activities and focus on key skill-building tasks. As with supporting children's development of self-regulation skills, children's increasing attention and focus are most effectively developed through active experiences, choices, predictable routines, and supportive coaching. Whole-group and teacher-directed instruction for extended periods of time most often results in teachers having to resort to restrictive responses to children's fussiness. This perpetuates less child initiation, language, and active exploration (Cassidy & Buell, 1996; Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003). Although some teacher-directed and whole-group activity is important in any classroom, these

must be minimal to ensure ample opportunity for emergent, authentic, meaningful experiences that children can easily relate to their own lives. Effective teachers generally keep whole-group activities to 20 minutes or less, and skillfully embed movement and a high degree of interaction in each session. This session may include songs, stories, visual materials, finger plays or body movements, puppets, interactive dialogues, peer-to-peer interactions, and clear connections to children's prior experiences.

A child's motivation to learn is one of the single most important contributors to success in school and as a learner throughout his or her life. An important part of facilitating children's learning and development is supporting children's interests through active, hands-on experiences on topics that are relevant to children's everyday lives. Interest-based centers or play and learning stations are organized ways to engage children alone and in small groups. Throughout instructional, free choice, self-care routine, and social times during the day, the quality of interactions with adults serves as a strong predictor of children's positive learning and developmental outcomes. Interactions that are warm, responsive, focused on individual children's strengths and needs, and supportively challenging promote positive outcomes in children as well as engender strong bonds.

Programming for Social-Emotional Learning

In recent decades, strong and copious evidence has emerged which demonstrates the importance of children's social and emotional learning (SEL), and the connection between SEL and school success (Denham, Hideko, Zinsser, & Wyatt, 2014; Rhodes, Warren, Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2011). "Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning; CASEL, 2012, p. 6). There are five core competences defined by CASEL under the term social and emotional learning, including interpersonal (relating to others) and intrapersonal (relating to one's self):

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

The benefits of effective SEL programming for children (from preschool throughout the school years) are vast and improve children's outcomes in school and life (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger 2011). Increases in social-emotional competence serve to strengthen children's skills and dispositions in the following ways (CASEL, 2012; Moore et. al., 2015):

- Positive attitude
- Prosocial behaviors

- Stronger interpersonal relationships with peers and adults
- Increased ability to manage cognitive demands of schooling
- Reduction in aggression, mental health problems, and substance abuse
- Improvement in school climate

Teachers and researchers alike recognize social-emotional strengths as the most important foundation for school readiness and success. Indeed, most professionals' definitions relating to a "readiness to learn" are framed around children's ability to regulate emotions and behavior, and interact effectively as part of a group (CASEL, 2012; Denham, et. al., 2012; Denham, Hideko, Zinsser, & Wyatt, 2014). This growing recognition of the importance of SEL has prompted changes in practice, program assessment, and even legislation. Early childhood professionals carefully attend to children's emotional interactions and environment, and programs are increasingly seeking technical assistance and professional development on SEL topics and strategies. What all of these indicators signify is that social-emotional learning is an essential focus of early childhood practice, and should never be minimized or marginalized in place of singular academic focus.

Key practices related to effective SEL cover two key overarching areas: teacher-child interactions and teaching strategies related to building social skills (CASEL, 2012). Effective programming related to SEL is designed as classroom-based, is organized in logical sequence, and focuses on active learning where children learn and practice clearly defined skills. Additionally, programming should provide opportunities for children to practice and use skills in settings outside the classroom as well (home, community).

At the foundation of all SEL practice is an emphasis on warm, nurturing, and responsive relationships with caregivers. From this foundation, adults are able to define specific skills and behaviors and then engage children in practicing and using these skills in supportive environments. Activities and opportunities for practice should be embedded in instructional times, as well as routines and free play times. Planning for SEL then extends to carefully networking supportive environments, including classroom, school/center, home, and community. Explicit instruction on emotional regulation and social skills is designed for all children, as well as being individualized based on a specific child's needs. Topics for social emotional skill-building and related instructional activity ideas include the following (Denham et al., 2003; Strain & Joseph, 2006):

TOPICS FOR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING	EXAMPLES OF RELATED ACTIVITIES
IDENTIFYING AND APPROPRIATELY EXPRESSING EMOTIONS	Facial expression picture cards; stories about emotions; games about guessing emotions; practicing responses to strong feelings
REGULATING OWN EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIORS	Mindfulness activities; breathing exercises; emotion identification games; practicing self-regulation strategies, such as placing a hand on someone's shoulder to get their attention; stories and dramatic games about emotions and appropriate actions; visual cues posted around the room
SOCIAL PROBLEM-SOLVING	Peace tables; peer mediation process; dramatic play games

INITIATING INTERACTIONS	Stories and dramatic play games that allow children to practice initiative interactions; verbal scripts and prompts to join groups
COOPERATING WITH OTHERS	Opportunities for cooperative play; dramatic play centers; simple games with rules; learning stations; labeling own and others' emotions; emotion response cards and visual cues
STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRONG EMOTIONS	Emotion identification cards and stories; practicing appropriate expressions; space and materials in the environment to allow for expression, for example, jars filled with a mixture of oil, water, and glitter which an angry child can shake, breathing calmly while liquids settle, or clay or firm pillows for squeezing or pounding
FRIENDSHIP-BUILDING SKILLS	Opportunities for shared play; positive notes and comments, such as Friendship Friday notes or "what I like about you" statements; individual highlights and sharing, such as "get to know you" opportunities

Changing Demographics

As a first-year second-grade teacher, Brendon felt ready to take on the challenges of the role. His school used a mentoring system, and he was paired with Sally-Anne, a 21-year veteran of the public schools. In one of their meetings before the school year officially started, SallyAnne reminisced about the changes she'd seen over the years. "I remember when this community was a small farm town," she said. "The kids here didn't have much sense of the world outside the town. In some ways, it was hard to get them to imagine what life could be like elsewhere. But slowly, over the years, more and more people moved here from the city. Small pockets of immigrant families began to shape the community. Back then, we didn't really have any plan for kids who didn't speak English or who couldn't keep up with the class. They were on their own."

Brendon couldn't imagine such a time. With all the classes he'd taken that talked about the importance of making plans for each individual child's abilities and valuing home culture, he was glad to be reminded of how far education had come.

SallyAnne agreed. "At first, it was hard for all of us," she said. "But we were lucky that our principals have been progressive enough to want to make change happen and that we were able to find resources to make it possible. So many schools still struggle today to make programs accessible for children with diverse needs. We all had workshops and formed collaborative teams to work on new ideas and plans. We started to rely on our parents and community to help us. Once they started to see they could have an impact on the advisory board, they really became involved. I learned a lot from them—even day-to-day things like new words in Spanish and Russian to communicate with several immigrant children. We became a team—real partners. Like I said, we were lucky. I know some schools that really resisted these demographic changes. In the end, it was hard not only on the kids but also on those teachers. They didn't have anyone

to rely on—no partnerships like we did. Now we see almost one-third of the class representing different cultures and languages. I love being able to rely on parents to bring a richness and liveliness to our culture studies. I see my kids getting excited about the differences out there. It makes them want to explore their world and understand each other."

Brendon was glad they had met that day. SallyAnne reminded him about the beauty of their diverse community. She also reminded him about the importance of coming together as a community to create a responsive, stimulating, collaborative learning environment.

Valuing Diversity

Early childhood environments of today reflect the rich diversity of our communities. The need for teachers to continue to develop ways to create environments that celebrate shared and individual cultures is at an all-time high. As educators, we must begin our work from a place of respect, sensitivity, and genuine interest in knowing and valuing our children and families. It is important for their development now, but it is also essential for their development later as they move out into the world beyond our classroom walls. The diversity around us holds many opportunities to bring meaningful, authentic experiences into the classroom. Partnerships with families and communities allow teachers to expand learning beyond the classroom and more realistically mirror children's lives. Sometimes teachers avoid recognizing differences in an attempt to promote equality ("We're all the same and equally welcome here," or "we're color-blind in this room."); however, this does not actually value what makes each individual special. It is our rich diversity that makes life so interesting and colorful. Celebrate what makes each person unique while exploring the ways in which we share common experiences.

In addition to sometimes downplaying differences, teachers also occasionally avoid topics or situations with which they are inexperienced. Unfortunately, this leaves teachers unprepared to handle situations when they arise. For example, many early childhood teachers are uncomfortable discussing issues of reproduction, gender identity, gender bias, or ethnic and racial biases in children's behavior. They may not seek to challenge children's assumptions about how children play, what kinds of roles they can play, or the materials with which they can play (for example, supporting children's play choices such as two boys getting married in dramatic play, an Asian child pretending to be a white cartoon character, or a child with a significant visual impairment playing the bus driver on the playground). Children are surprisingly astute at internalizing social rules and norms. As teachers, we need to be aware of certain biases in these norms—perhaps even in our own beliefs—and challenge them so all children become aware that they are empowered with choices and self-direction (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2004). Integrating quality children's books with explicit messages about valuing diversity is a great way for professionals to ensure each child feel represented in the classroom, and to start important conversations with all children.

BL/BSIP/Alamy Stock Photo

Inclusive classrooms support active participation for all children.

Equality and Equity: Everyone Has a Place at the Table

Educators have been advocating for the inclusion of all children in programs and classrooms for more than a century. It has been only a little more than a quarter century, however, that inclusive classrooms have become mandatory in schools. Today, educators rely on the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (IDEA) as a foundation for inclusive practices, but they go beyond the laws to fully embrace the spirit of inclusion. That law, dating back to 1975, has been reauthorized over the years to make provisions for schools and programs to address the needs of children with limited English proficiency and children who are homeless as well as children with disabilities (Gargiulo, 2006). The law provides guidelines for schools to offer intervention services, specialized staff, and technologies to children who are in need of assistance to help them succeed in school (Bruder, 2010; Darragh, 2010). Of particular importance to early childhood professionals is the trend in the law and in models of high-quality practice that emphasizes the essential interrelationships between young children and their families. This translates into a call to provide essential structure and supports for families to be knowledgeable and meaningfully involved in all aspects of referrals, decision-making, service provision, and assessment.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The 1975 law that ensures access to equal learning environments for all children with disabilities.

In the same way that we believe in the value of diversity to enhance and enrich our lives, so, too, we value the unique contributions children at all developmental levels bring to the classroom. By viewing each child as an important member of the classroom with something special to share, we can begin to create authentic communities of learners who rely on and validate each other. When classrooms are viewed as a community, there is an opportunity for each child to feel valued. Communities are connected by the interrelationships of their systems, structures, and members. Within this framework, each individual contributes to the identity of the whole. Children can be unique and special at the same time that they are part of a shared culture. It is important for teachers to look for ways in which to encourage each child and family to have a role within the classroom community. A growing body of research reveals that children in inclusive classroom

Putting It Into Practice

The Potential in All Children

Creating a class book is one way to highlight each child's potential within the class as a whole. Children can create pages about themselves, what they like, and their talents through dictation, signing, drawing, writing, selecting pictures, and so on, which then can be combined into a larger class story. A similar classroom community project is to create a documentation panel on large cardboard sheets. The panel can include photos, children's work, stories, quotes, and family notes. Viewing the classroom community as a patchwork of individuals coming together to create a unified whole can also be represented in a class quilt, in which each child creates a square with his or her family and unites it with others' squares on a quilt at school.

settings hold more positive attitudes about children with diverse abilities, especially when teachers take an active role in helping to facilitate acceptance and inclusion (Dyson, 2005; Nikolaraizi et al., 2005). This underscores the important role teachers play in promoting and modeling a culture that genuinely values diversity within the classroom.

An important element of valuing diversity is to view children as unique and on individual developmental paths. Not all children achieve the same milestones at the same time, just as not all children speak the same language or prefer the same activities or foods. Each child has capabilities to achieve meaningful goals. Our task as educators is to help identify what goals children are working on at the moment and to develop ways to facilitate their progress toward realizing their highest potential. Once again, the partnerships with families and community support become important in this quest. When additional support and help are needed for individual children, teachers must be able to connect with the community resources that offer such help. At the heart of all we do, we must view all children as capable and always remain committed to finding ways to unlock each child's amazing potential.

Standards in Early Childhood Education

Quality early childhood programs are highly intentional about integrating developmental theories with important learning standards though active learning experiences. Standards, in the form of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice framework, Head Start Performance Outcomes, various state early learning standards, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and national content-area standards, seek to provide overarching goals for what young children should learn and be able to do. Many teachers struggle with feeling limited to teaching only to standards. This creates a limited view of children's lives. In a time when we are recognizing the importance of the context of children's lives and experiences—meaning that children learn and grow in a dynamic system of influences, including home, family, school, and community—teachers must understand how to use standards effectively as one of many tools for effective teaching.

Although it can feel limiting to use standards as a starting place for instruction, teachers can instead start with elements of good practice and fit standards into practice. Good practice means (Jalongo et al., 2004)

- Understanding broad developmental trends while planning for individual development
- Balancing instruction to engage diverse learning styles and address all domains
- Creating environments that are safe, stimulating, and welcoming for children of all ability levels
- Meeting children's basic needs for sustenance, shelter, clothing, and health care
- Encouraging processing and representation in a variety of ways
- Helping children make personal connections and find meaning in their experiences
- Supporting families with respect for their diversity

Standard learning goals within each domain or content area, such as math, literacy, science, or arts, can be successfully addressed in a balanced approach to teaching

encompassing children's play and interest-based projects. As noted previously, play is pure enjoyment for children but also a powerful vehicle for active, meaningful learning (Elkind, 2003; Fraser, 2007; Hirsh, 2004). It is through play that children are engaged in authentic activities stemming from their own internal interests, developing self-regulation skills within the context of a group, and building strengths in all areas of development. Here are some examples:

- Pretend play promotes social development through shared creation of dramatic play scenarios and role negotiation.
- Building with blocks helps children develop spatial abilities, counting, and shape recognition.
- Painting helps children learn colors, develops imagination and creativity, enhances spatial thinking, and develops pencil grip.
- Dictating, writing, and acting out stories promote language arts development (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and understanding of story structure, comprehension, as well as valuing personal experiences and perspectives.
- Moving water or sand in a sensory table develops children's knowledge of physics, for example, how different materials behave and change form, as well as their sense of touch.
- Climbing on a play structure promotes physical development, coordination, and balance.

Skillful teachers tune in to children's play and interests and prompt, question, provoke, and support the depth of children's activities. While investigating interesting topics, children are able to actually apply emerging academic skills and learn more richly through firsthand discovery. These kinds of instructional practices robustly enhance children's learning and development in individually meaningful, developmentally aligned ways. Furthermore, giving children space to choose activities and topics develops choice-making, curiosity, and initiative. All of these goals are part of learning standards and, more important, are part of quality practice. When viewed as a part of the picture, standards do not have to be at odds with what teachers believe about the best ways to educate young children.

Lissanna Follari

Standards can be appropriately integrated into learning activities and assessment so that children's experiences remain authentic and enjoyable.

With the widespread adoption of the CCSS for K-12 by all but a handful of states, many educators are seeing an increased focus on standards and content outcomes. The CCSS are currently made up of two documents, one for English Language Arts and one for Math, and were designed to be a list of

Tools of the Mind

Research on the benefits of play-based, constructivist approaches to early care and education is guiding current views of best practices. Based on the work of Russian-born psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum "is a novel approach emphasizing intentional development of specific academic skills and self-regulation of behavior and emotions with play featured in a leading role in the curriculum" (Barnett et al., 2008). Mental tools are strategies that children integrate into their thinking and processing that then allow them to become more capable to regulate themselves (thought, behavior) and their environment (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky valued language as a pivotal mental tool in learning, memory, and self-regulation as well as a key component of how teachers can support, prompt, and challenge children's learning (scaffolding their learning and development as they reach higher levels of independence). Through the mastery of language as an organizer of thought, children can learn to talk themselves through challenges, connect new ideas to existing mental frameworks, and elaborate on existing ideas to expand knowledge. Additional examples of mental tools include using symbols to represent something, creating rhymes to remember content, and aligning with rules and roles of sociodramatic play. When viewed through a constructivist lens, children's play is seen as a key means for children to organize and regulate their behavior. We see this in the following aspects of play:

- Roles are defined and these roles guide behaviors and dictate actions (pretending to be a teacher, a horse, or a mother).
- Rules, which are implied and sometimes negotiated, are based on play roles, such as rules about how a teacher behaves.
- Children negotiate differences in understanding roles and rules, as well as work through differences in experience and beliefs.
- Children create plans and implement them through play scenarios, learning to adjust and be flexible through conflict and negotiation with others.

Furthermore, research has revealed that in play, children's mental skills, such as attention, memory, recall, and imagination, are at a higher level than during any other activity (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Connecting these important findings, the *Tools* curriculum guides teachers to facilitate children's acquisition of essential mental tools through play, carefully guided activities, pretend and story dramatization, and systematic observations. Research is showing significant positive results in children's memory, self-regulation, and literacy achievement (Blair & Raver, 2014). With the strong connection between self-regulation and school success, the *Tools* curriculum has important implications for early childhood practice in preschool and early elementary (Barnett, et al, 2008; Blair & Raver, 2014).

the most essential academic outcomes students in kindergarten through 12th grade need to know to be successful in college and career (Doorey, 2013). Efforts are also underway to develop and publish additional content area standards. The standards themselves are not a prescriptive directive of how to teach, and their creators promote many approaches to instruction, including play, as viable ways for children to achieve competence in the outcomes (NGACBP, CCSSO, 2010). These standards are, however, higher than many previous state standards in terms of academic rigor and focus on key differences in content such as informational texts and approaches to early reading instruction (Shanahan, 2013). Some educators are finding that the CCSS provide a helpful framework for instructional benchmarking. Other educators are experiencing stress and pressure of curriculum narrowing, inappropriate use of products and materials lists marketed as CCSS specific, and high-stakes assessments (Grennon, Brooks, & Dietz, 2013).

Implementation of the CCSS, although specifically written for K-12, has important implications for those working with children from birth to 5 years old. Of particular concern for early childhood professionals is the ongoing worry about the inappropriate pushing of academic expectations onto younger and younger children (NAEYC, 2012). It is essential that providers of early care and education to children prior to school age participate in the ongoing dialogues about best practices in ECE (through third grade), the important place standards can have in our work, and appropriate ways to effectively ensure all children are having robust, healthful early learning experiences. Early childhood professionals are called upon to recognize that early learning standards (NAEYC, 2012)

- Must include all developmental areas (the CCSS content areas are but two parts)
- Are only one of many components of quality ECE, including teacher preparation and support, adequate program funding, equitable access, overall program quality, appropriate curricula, etc.
- Must work in concert with flexible, developmentally appropriate, and responsive instruction
- Are able to be assessed through a variety of appropriate means

Through diligent effort to understand and recognize the role standards play in our practice, effective early childhood professionals can take a lead role in advocating for and "pushing up" best practices in ECE.

Evidence-Based Practice and Data-Driven Decisions

Intentionality is a first and foremost requisite of effective teaching. Teaching with intentionality means that professionals make careful, reflective, deliberate decisions about all aspects of children's care and learning experiences, including

- environmental design,
- material selection,
- organization of time,
- how children are grouped,
- activities and guided lessons,
- assessment tools and practices, and
- promoting family participation.

Evidence-based practice

A decision-making process that integrates research evidence, family perspectives, and professional wisdom.

Many teachers are highly thoughtful in these decisions, but a true mark of intentionality is that teachers deliberately make evidence-based decisions in all aspects of their work. **Evidence-based practice** is defined as the process of making decisions for practice that carefully and intentionally factors in three essential elements (Buysse, Winton, Rous, Epstein, & Lim, 2012; Spencer, Detrich, & Slocum, 2012):

1. The best available evidence: practices that have demonstrated effectiveness through a number of high-quality research studies as reported in relevant, current professional literature
2. Professional judgment: defining situations, needs, and problems and evaluating potential solutions or actions based on professional preparation and knowledge and appropriate personal experience
3. Children's family context: values, goals, and core beliefs of children's families as they relate to children's learning and development

Thus, evidence-based practice requires that professionals review current literature on effective instruction, consider knowledge of individual children and families, and use professional judgment and experience to appropriately respond to each child. Engaging in practice this way positions teachers as reflective researchers who critically examine evidence; assess options; contextualize actions within program, family, and community contexts; and make deliberate decisions with clear rationale.

Within the scope of effective evidence-based practice is the integration of systematically collected assessment data on each child. To make the most appropriate decisions for each child, professionals must consistently and regularly gather assessment evidence on children's developmental and learning progress. It is only by gathering data on a variety of appropriate assessment measures that professionals are able to tailor instructional decisions to effectively support each child's unique strengths and needs. Numerous tools and procedures are available to accomplish this:

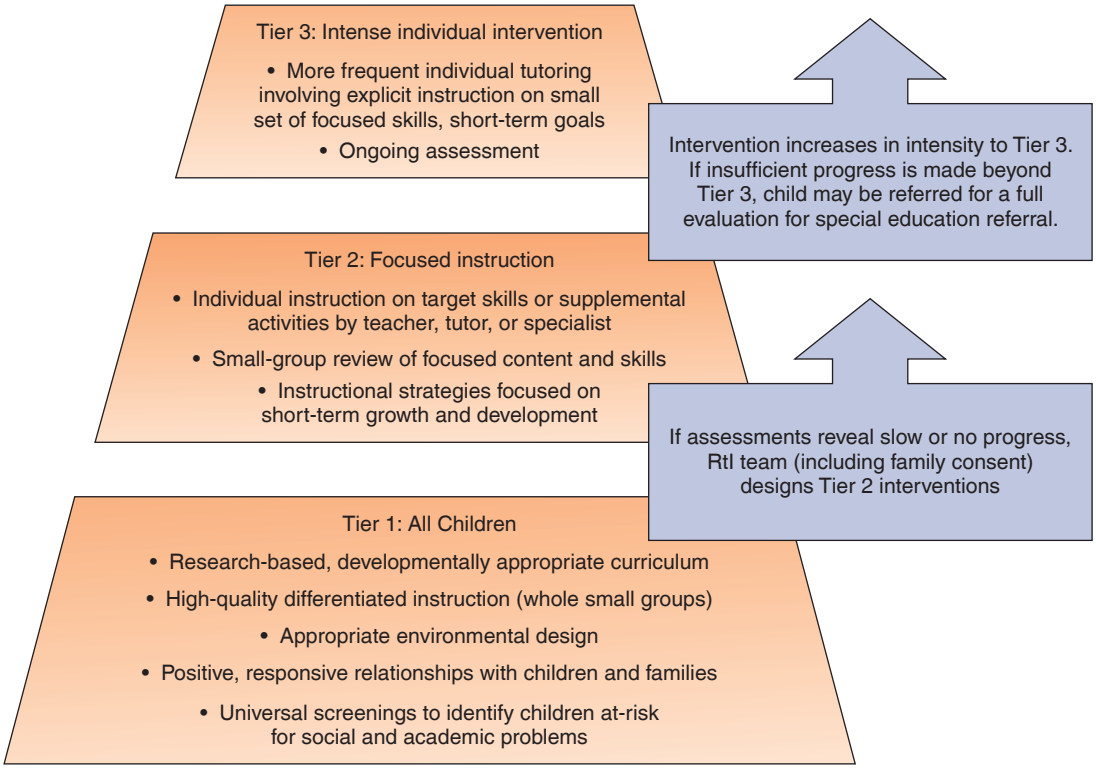
- Developmental checklists
- Observation notes
- Work samples with notes on context
- Reports on completion of performance assessments
- Transcripts of dialogues and quotes
- Scores on appropriate tests or measures

The key principles in effective use of assessment data are to engage in a systematic process in which data on each child's progress is gathered regularly (at least bimonthly), through only developmentally appropriate activities, and that the assessment tool or activity be relevant to context of children's experience. Through ongoing data collection and reflection, professionals are able to use relevant data to make individualized decisions tailored to each child. Figure 1-5 shows the cycle of planning, teaching, and assessment.

One example of a school system-wide practice that emphasizes both a strong evidence base as well as ongoing data-driven decision-making is the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. RtI is a multitiered system of support (MTSS), meaning that programs are designed with several levels of instruction and individualizing is embedded in each level and based on an assessment-instruction-assessment structure

FIGURE 1-5

Response to Intervention



(Bayat, Mindes, & Covitt, 2010). Instruction is based on a research-supported curriculum and delivered deliberately through high-quality practice. Assessment is implemented with all children at initial, formative (during), and summative (end point) stages, and resulting data are used to guide instructional and service decisions (Jackson, Pretti-Frontczack, Harjusola-Webb, Grisham-Brown, & Romani, 2009).

The most popular tier model is a three-tier structure, which increases in intensity and individualization as a child progresses "up" the hierarchy, representing an increase in need for individualized instruction and support. The application of tiers of instruction is also flexible across developmental or educational outcomes and will vary based on each child's functioning in each outcome (DEC, NAEYC, & NHSA, 2013). Figure 1-5 provides a diagram of a structure for RtI.

Beginning the Journey

As you move forward through this book, keep in mind your developing beliefs about teaching, your image of yourself as an educator, and the issues that affect the field of early childhood. Whereas some issues, such as use of technology, are uniquely modern issues, there are others that echo throughout our history. You are entrusted with the

task of continuing the dedicated march toward reshaping practice, improving professionalism, embodying lofty ideals, and empowering children and families.

Volumes of writing from centuries of thought about childhood, learning, teaching, and society as well as our own reflections and experiences can assist you in facing this challenge. The challenge for teachers now is first to inform ourselves about the voices from history—their messages, meanings, and teachings. Equally important is the hand-in-hand effort to learn about ourselves, our assumptions, our own beliefs, and our own personal histories through continued self-reflection (Landerholm, Gehrie, & Hao, 2004). Through this outward and inward learning, you must find your unique way to bring together the sea of professional knowledge and recommendations with your personal passions and drives. The work of the educator is at once both highly professional and deeply personal. It is about thinking, feeling, and doing. In essence, this is work we do with our heads, our hearts, and our hands.

Through this work, we can realize our ultimate goal of ensuring that all children live successful, meaningful lives. Each chapter presented in this text is a story, a voice from the field that shares new ideas and experiences. Let these stories inspire you as you begin creating your own story. Welcome to the journey!

Putting It Into Practice

Technology and Teaching

You use any number of technological tools throughout your day and your life as a student. You may not even really think twice about many of these tools. As an educator, however, you must make careful decisions about what tools are beneficial to children. For example, you may have access to computers or tablets for your classroom. Numerous games and educational programs are available for children's use on computers and tablets. Many programs call themselves "educational," although this may not necessarily be true. It is your job to be a careful consumer of all the materials you select for your classroom. Many of the programs and computer applications work on skills that can be addressed in other, more active and socially interactive ways. Think carefully about why you select materials, and always look for the most active, meaningful, healthful choices.

Technological improvements have also come a long way in improving the experience of many children with diverse abilities. Hearing aids for children with hearing impairments, apps and speaking devices for children who cannot speak, computer-driven wheelchairs for children with limited mobility, and digital picture boards are a few examples of the assistive technology tools that make it possible for children to participate in inclusive classrooms. Translation programs and bilingual materials that speak in multiple languages are also helpful for dual-language learners. Familiarize yourself with these tools by talking to other professionals and reading blogs online to be able to better serve all families. I also encourage teachers to become skilled in using technology as a tool for their own

benefit. There is a wealth of information (reliable and not so reliable) available online and through apps that can help you become a better teacher. There are forums where you can network with other educators across the world. There are ideas, plans, and strategies you can find to assist you in your work. Many programs also use digital assessment programs or portfolios to document and monitor children's progress. For all of the valuable ways to use these technologies, you must maintain a critical eye and carefully select applications that best serve your children and families as well as being deliberate about when to unplug.

Summary

- The ages from birth through 8 years old define the term *young children* or the *early childhood years*.
- At no other time of life do we see greater leaps and changes in human growth, making early childhood educators profoundly important in children's lives.
- Early childhood education refers to systems of education and care for young children by people other than family members in diverse settings outside of the child's home.
- A key task of the professional is to hone the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to meet high standards of quality practice and to demonstrate these in a professional portfolio.
- Your portfolio is representative of your professional identity and capabilities and may be aligned with one of several national standards frameworks.
- Early childhood professionals take on several important roles in the lives of children and families, including the following:
  - Teacher
  - Researcher
  - Lifelong learner
  - Child and family advocate
- Children's play is a primary vehicle for their learning and development and is often highly complex and varied.
- Supporting children's self-regulation through activities, routines, and naturally occurring opportunities to practice meeting appropriate social group expectations is an essential task of early childhood professionals.
- High-quality teaching today must reflect the diverse context within which children are growing and learning and value diversity and inclusion of each child and family.
- Today's high-quality practice calls upon professionals to be highly intentional about effectively integrating knowledge of development, individual children, social emotional learning, community contexts, and appropriate learning standards to meet each child's needs.

CHAPTER LEARNING OUTCOMES SELF-ASSESSMENT

Use this chart to write down three to five key points for each learning outcome that you learned from this chapter.

Identify key highlights of development and learning in children from birth to 8 years old.	
Explore the scope and features of early childhood education.	
Discuss the role and tasks of a teacher-education student.	
Describe the complex roles of early childhood teachers.	
Articulate important issues facing today's early childhood profession.	
Organize initial ideas about your professional identity.	

APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

Discussion Prompts

1. Which of the many complex roles of the early childhood teacher do you feel most ready to take on, and which do you feel are the most challenging?
2. What prior experiences and internal qualities do you feel strengthen your skills and dispositions as a teacher?

In Class: Describe Your Favorite Teacher Think back to when you were in school—any age or grade. Think about one of your favorite teachers. What do you recall? What was it about this teacher that made you respond? Write a few phrases, words, or sentences to describe your memories. Share them with your class or small group. What common threads emerge? How do your memories and points from the class discussion fit into your vision of the ideal teacher—the kind of teacher you hope to become?

When I do this exercise with my own students, it is always the personal qualities that come through as the most memorable: someone who cared, someone who went out of his or her way for you, someone you felt you could talk to about anything, someone who felt like a friend and teacher, someone who truly wanted to see you

succeed as a person and a student. Did you find the same thing in your memories and in your class discussion? Keep in mind your memories of your favorite teacher and the effect he or she had on you as you develop your own teacher identity.

In the Field Create a list of questions about learning standards, managing a classroom, guidance strategies, and promoting success in meeting standards for all children, including those with diverse abilities. Arrange to interview an early childhood teacher to find answers to your questions. Choose a teacher who has been teaching for at least four years.

For Your Portfolio As you begin your journey into this introduction to early childhood education, you might already bring with you years of experience and prior coursework, or this might be the start of your professional path. In either case, a good starting point for your portfolio is to create a brief autobiography, including basic information about yourself as well as a section describing why you want to be in this field. Once you decide on a specific portfolio organization plan (perhaps based on standards, your teacher-education department's own framework, or the Child Development Associate content areas), your autobiography fits nicely into an introductory section along with a résumé and transcripts. Your autobiography is also a useful document to share with classroom teachers when you complete field hours or student teaching.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Overview: People and Beliefs That Shaped the Field

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify overarching themes in the history of care and education for young children.
- Discuss key influences on early education in the 1600s and 1700s.
- Examine values about children and education in the 1800s.
- Compare beliefs and practices in the 1900s, and make connections to present-day practice.
- Explore early childhood best practices in the context of today's diverse world.

The field of early childhood care and education has a long history involving divergent viewpoints, dedicated educators and theorists, and a pattern of pendulum swings in terms of popular practice. The study of how young children have been viewed, treated, and educated is rich and complex. It is entwined with the histories of social welfare, cultural movements, religion, and politics. This chapter provides you with an overarching historical backdrop to help you understand where we are today and why we believe what we do about best practices.

The backdrop of early childhood education's past and evolution will help you understand the more detailed approaches, frameworks, and theories that you will explore throughout the rest of this text. The history of education is a bit of a roller-coaster ride, so hang on! Use the charts in Appendices A, B, and C to help you keep

names, dates, and important theories straight. Think about what values, beliefs, and practices stand out as elements that may guide your own eclectic practice.

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

Several hotly debated issues run like threads through the patchwork of US early childhood history. At some times more prominent than at others, these are the underlying trends that have influenced practice. While you take a look back at the history of early childhood education, a connection is made in each section between history and current practice. As you travel along the historical timeline of this chapter, the following issues will be your traveling companions:

- The prevailing views regarding children
- The role of families, particularly women, at home and in society
- International theories, research, and trends that influence educational programming in the United States
- The effects of **socio-economic status** on early care and education practice
- Early childhood settings as **custodial care** (focus on keeping children safe rather than educational programming) or education; the goals and purpose of the programming

Socio-economic status

The status within community and society based on income level, family economic stability, and social acceptance.

Custodial care

Type of program for young children that emphasized care and service to parents but did not have strong educational components.

Think about children's experiences throughout history as you consider what you want your own practice to be like and what experiences you hope to provide for children. The core beliefs about what to teach, how to teach, and who should be responsible for early care and education have shifted and changed throughout centuries of dynamic practice. Practice has been closely connected to how society perceives children and families in general and the role of societal systems in the care and education of children.

LIFE IN THE 1600S AND 1700S: HARSH TRADITIONS AND NEW IDEAS

In Colonial America, children were generally treated as small adults, and childhood was not necessarily valued as an important phase of life. Colonial American society generally agreed that children should be taught to read the Bible from an early age, initially at home with their fathers as teachers (Spodek, 1985). In 1647, Massachusetts enacted a law requiring the establishment of local schools for young children. These schools were often called **dame schools** because they were run by the women of the community (Beatty, 1995). The schools were places to care for children while adults worked and to instill piety through readings of the Bible. School activities stemmed from a desire to teach children the value of hard work, strong moral character based on religious beliefs, and trade skills they would use as adults (Hacsi, 1995). This harsh perspective was to shift, however, as philosophers of the 1700s delved more deeply into the study of children and childhood as a unique period of life.

Dame schools

Early local, public schools established in the mid-1600s to provide basic care for children of working mothers.

Influential People, Contexts, and Ideas of the 1600s

By the earliest decades of the 1600s, philosophers and educators were beginning to focus their attention on early childhood as a distinct stage of life. Several key theorists emerged with ideas that countered the harsh educational practices being used in Europe and America (Matthews, 2003). Eastern European religious leader **John Amos Comenius** (1592–1670) was one of the earliest authors to produce a text outlining a modern system of education for all children (Beatty, 1995). He continued to advocate for universal education, which Martin Luther (1483–1546) had successfully promoted in some European countries (Sandsmark, 2002). Comenius saw nature as a prime method of fostering children's growth, and advocated letting children play and grow in natural, harmonious settings. He was among the first to propose that young children had a great potential for learning and ought to learn through active means (Schickedanz, 1995).

Comenius also promoted the role of mothers—not school—as the best educators of children under the age of 6, and he wrote a guidebook outlining all the concepts, skills, and activities he felt children should be taught. Although his guide was quite specific in its details, Comenius nevertheless insisted that mothers tailor instruction to each child because children develop at different rates, and he warned against excessive academics too early.

A scant 40 years later, doctor and philosopher **John Locke** (1632–1704) produced another guide to education that had a great effect on educational practices in America. Much of his work contradicted customary practices and promoted views of children that were more favorable, free, and playful. Locke strongly emphasized the importance of firsthand experiences as a means of learning. This viewpoint gave rise to the concept of experiential education, which is still in favor today. Locke emphasized the importance of education (less emphasis on innate drives) and proposed that children were like blank pages or wax that should be molded and shaped by experience (Henson, 2003). For Locke, experience was education.

Locke believed that the development and education of young children were best served by parents as educators. He advocated instructing children as young as 1 or 2 in literacy, but he cautioned that academic instruction should feel more like play to children (Beatty, 1995). He also encouraged parents to use children's internal need for approval and guilt to manipulate them into desired behaviors, preferring reasoning with children to physical punishment (Hulbert, 1999). He differed from previous theorists in that his beliefs were more centered on children and less centered on religion.

The beliefs of Comenius and Locke did much to counter the negative view of children that generally pervaded the 17th century. The pendulum had begun to swing toward more favorable beliefs about children's innate character. Fortunately for children, this trend toward a deeper awareness of the nature of young children and a respect for childhood as a unique stage of life formed the foundation for the vision of the next round of influential theorists.

Influential People, Contexts, and Ideas of the 1700s

For the romantics—some of the enlightenment thinkers who permeated the 1700s and 1800s—education was a naturally unfolding process. However, it needed to involve careful teaching to come to fruition and create balanced individuals who could operate