"Essa and Burnham's text is clear and concise, and presents information in an easy-to-understand format for my students. The textbook includes NAEYC standards and stresses Developmentally Appropriate Practices and play."

—Lois Silvernail, *Spring Hill College*

Introduction to Early Childhood Education provides current and future educators with a highly readable, comprehensive overview of the field. The underlying philosophy of the book is that early childhood educators' most important task is to provide a program that is sensitive to and supports the development of young children. Author Eva L. Essa and new co-author Melissa Burnham provide valuable insight by strategically dividing the book into six sections that answer the "What, Who, Why, Where, and How" of early childhood education. Utilizing both NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) standards, this supportive text provides students with the skills, theories, and best practices needed to succeed and thrive as early childhood educators.

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New to the Eighth Edition

- **New co-author Melissa Burnham** contributes in-depth knowledge of child development, extensive understanding of brain architecture, application of the latest brain research to practice, and a deep comprehension of progressive models of education.
- **This edition reflects the latest research, statistics, policy, and changes in the field of early childhood education**, providing the latest information as students enter the field.
- **All chapters now begin with specific learning objectives based on Bloom's Taxonomy**, helping to better organize the chapters and tie the objectives to the main sub-sections as well as to the NAEYC Standards for Professional Preparation Programs.
- **All chapters list the specific NAEYC standard(s) met in the section** and include in-depth links leading to NAEYC Standards for further study.
- **The renamed feature, Brain Science,** focuses on recent brain development research, tying aspects of child development to the study of the brain, and discusses why this research is relevant to early childhood education practitioners.

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INTRODUCTION TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION EDITION 8

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EDITION 8

INTRODUCTION TO

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

EVA L. ESSA & MELISSA M. BURNHAM

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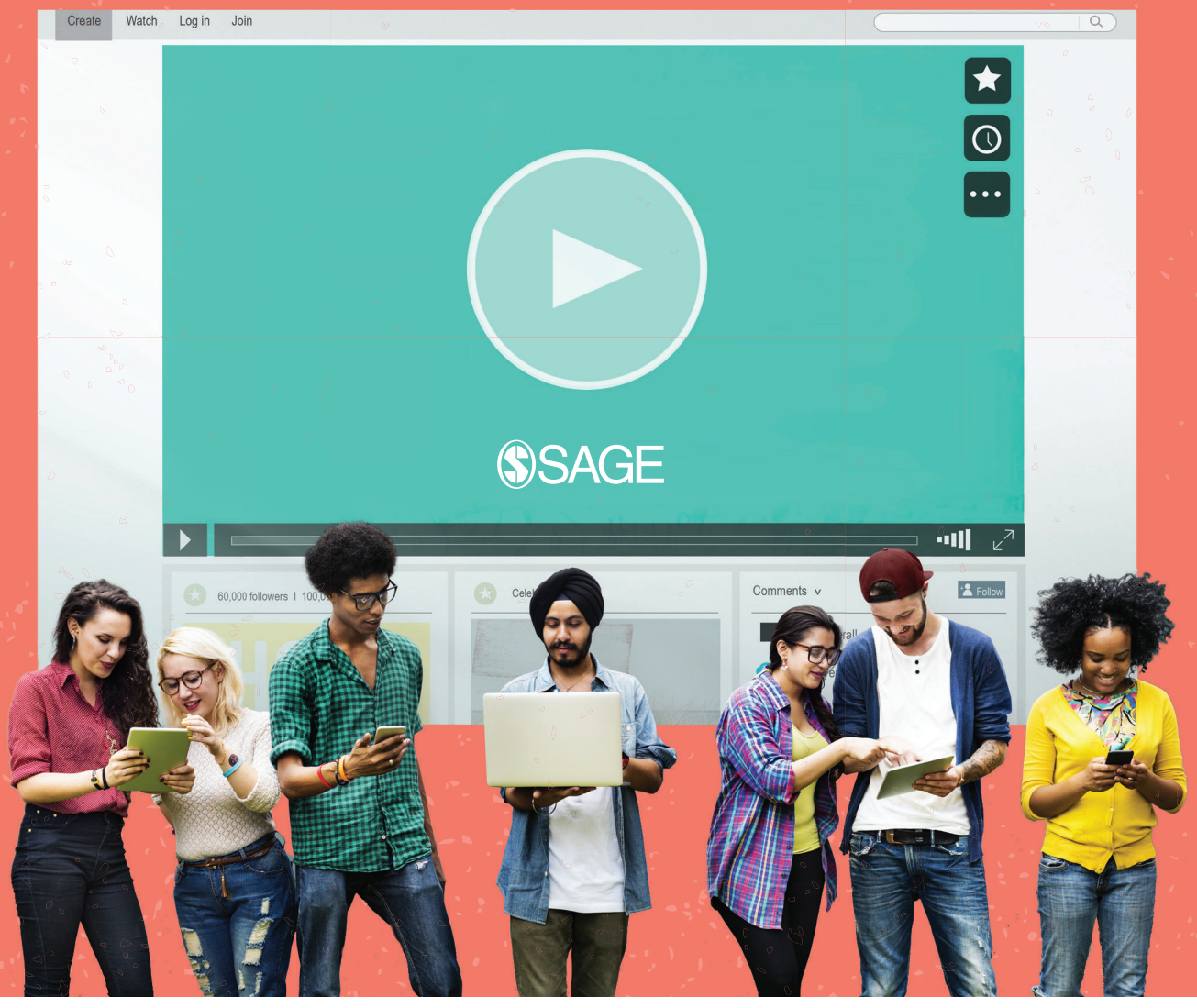
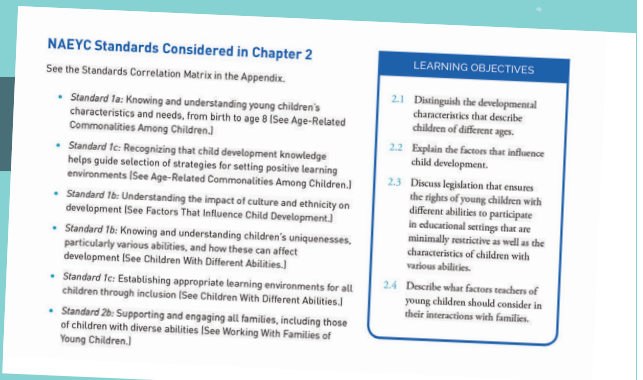


The Hallmark Features

A COMPLETE LEARNING PACKAGE

- ***LEARNING OBJECTIVES* ARE PAIRED WITH NAEYC STANDARDS**—a summary of the standards discussed in each chapter are provided, preparing readers for which standards will be covered and where they are discussed in more depth.
- The renamed feature, ***BRAIN SCIENCE***, focuses on recent brain development research, tying an aspect of child development to the study of the brain and discussing how and why this research is relevant to early childhood education practitioners.
- **VIDEO CASES**, included in the Interactive eBook, offer students the opportunity to observe real-life educators and classrooms to provide teachers-in-training a sense of what to expect in their future classrooms.
- The ***TAKE A CLOSER LOOK*** feature offers in-depth information about a topic of importance to the field of early childhood education.
- ***STORIES FROM THE FIELD*** are found in each chapter and feature a story from an early childhood practitioner, providing firsthand narratives and insight into what makes working with young children meaningful to professionals.
- ***KEY QUESTIONS*** are posed at the end of each chapter to help readers reflect on the information and further explore its relevance, with some questions suggesting activities to reinforce understanding of the topic.



NAEYC Standards Considered in Chapter 2

See the Standards Correlation Matrix in the Appendix.

- *Standard 1a:* Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth to age 8 [See Age-Related Commonalities Among Children.]
- *Standard 1c:* Recognizing that child development knowledge helps guide selection of strategies for setting positive learning environments [See Age-Related Commonalities Among Children.]
- *Standard 1b:* Understanding the impact of culture and ethnicity on development [See Factors That Influence Child Development.]
- *Standard 1b:* Knowing and understanding children's uniquenesses, particularly various abilities, and how these can affect development [See Children With Different Abilities.]
- *Standard 1c:* Establishing appropriate learning environments for all children through inclusion [See Children With Different Abilities.]
- *Standard 2b:* Supporting and engaging all families, including those of children with diverse abilities [See Working With Families of Young Children.]

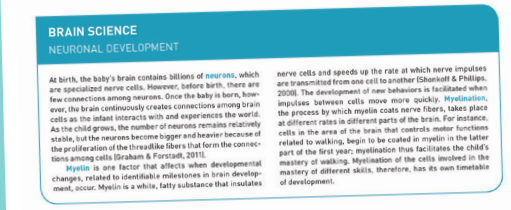
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 Distinguish the developmental characteristics that describe children of different ages.

2.2 Explain the factors that influence child development.

2.3 Discuss legislation that ensures the rights of young children with different abilities to participate in educational settings that are minimally restrictive as well as the characteristics of children with various abilities.

2.4 Describe what factors teachers of young children should consider in their interactions with families.

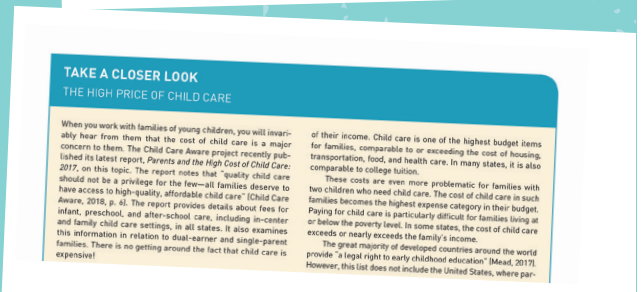


BRAIN SCIENCE

NEURONAL DEVELOPMENT

At birth, the baby's brain contains billions of neurons, which are specialized nerve cells. However, before birth, there are few connections among neurons. Once the baby is born, however, the brain continuously creates connections among brain cells as the infant interacts with and experiences the world. As the child grows, the number of neurons remains relatively stable, but the neurons become bigger and heavier because of the proliferation of the threadlike fibers that form the connections among cells (Graham & Forstadt, 2011).

Myelin is one factor that affects when developmental changes, related to identifiable milestones in brain development, occur. Myelin is a white, fatty substance that insulates nerve cells and speeds up the rate at which nerve impulses are transmitted from one cell to another (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The development of new behaviors is facilitated when impulses between cells move more quickly. Myelination, the process by which myelin coats nerve fibers, takes place at different rates in different parts of the brain. For instance, cells in the area of the brain that controls motor functions related to walking, begin to be coated in myelin in the latter part of the first year; myelination thus facilitates the child's mastery of walking. Myelination of the cells involved in the mastery of different skills, therefore, has its own timetable of development.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

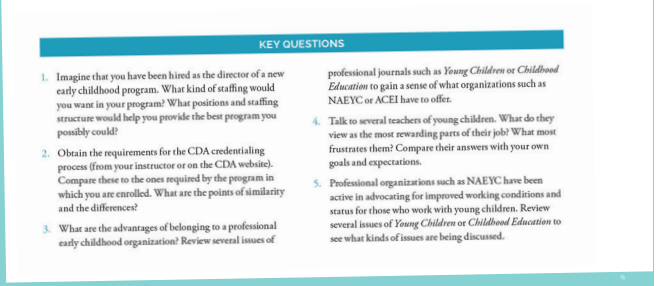
THE HIGH PRICE OF CHILD CARE

When you work with families of young children, you will invariably hear from them that the cost of child care is a major concern to them. The Child Care Aware project recently published its latest report, *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2017*, on this topic. The report notes that "quality child care should not be a privilege for the few—all families deserve to have access to high-quality, affordable child care" (Child Care Aware, 2018, p. 6). The report provides details about fees for infant, preschool, and after-school care, including in-center and family child care settings, in all states. It also examines this information in relation to dual-earner and single-parent families. There is no getting around the fact that child care is expensive!

of their income. Child care is one of the highest budget items for families, comparable to or exceeding the cost of housing, transportation, food, and health care. In many states, it is also comparable to college tuition.

These costs are even more problematic for families with two children who need child care. The cost of child care in such families becomes the highest expense category in their budget. Paying for child care is particularly difficult for families living at or below the poverty level. In some states, the cost of child care exceeds or nearly exceeds the family's income.

The great majority of developed countries around the world provide "a legal right to early childhood education" (Mead, 2017). However, this list does not include the United States, where par-



KEY QUESTIONS

1. Imagine that you have been hired as the director of a new early childhood program. What kind of staffing would you want in your program? What positions and staffing structure would help you provide the best program you possibly could?
2. Obtain the requirements for the CDA credentialing process (from your instructor or on the CDA website). Compare these to the ones required by the program in which you are enrolled. What are the points of similarity and the differences?
3. What are the advantages of belonging to a professional early childhood organization? Review several issues of professional journals such as *Young Children* or *Childhood Education* to gain a sense of what organizations such as NAEYC or ACEI have to offer.
4. Talk to several teachers of young children. What do they view as the most rewarding parts of their job? What most frustrates them? Compare their answers with your own goals and expectations.
5. Professional organizations such as NAEYC have been active in advocating for improved working conditions and status for those who work with young children. Review several issues of *Young Children* or *Childhood Education* to see what kinds of issues are being discussed.

Introduction to Early Childhood Education

Eighth Edition

Uncountable thanks continue to go to my late husband, Ahmed Essa, whose unwavering support; encouragement; and wise, steadfast suggestions have always kept me going. In addition, it is my great joy and pleasure to dedicate this work to my real-life model of early childhood, my granddaughter, Jordan, who is also the creator of this book's cover picture. I also dedicate the book to my daughter, Fiona, my son, Eugene, my daughter-in-law, Kristie, and my "honorary grandsons," Cadel and Keagan.

Eva L. Essa

My contributions to this book are dedicated to my wife, colleague, and best friend, LeAn Shelton and our sons, Nick and Charlie. LeAn pushes my growth as an early childhood professional, while Nick and Charlie provide important insights into child development that only full immersion could bestow.

Melissa M. Burnham

Introduction to Early Childhood Education

Eighth Edition

Eva L. Essa

University of Nevada, Reno

Melissa M. Burnham

University of Nevada, Reno

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BRIEF CONTENTS

DETAILED CONTENTS

PREFACE

Dear Reader:

With this book, *Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Eighth Edition*, you are embarking on a fascinating journey. The field of early childhood education is a rich and rewarding endeavor for a dedicated person, like yourself, whose aim is to make a difference by working with young children and their families. After reading this book, you will be much more knowledgeable about young children and families, the many components of high-quality early childhood programs, and the role of the professional early childhood educator. What can you expect as you read on?

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This text is intended for current or future professionals who want to learn more about early childhood education. This field encompasses work with children from infancy through age 8. Thus, included in the book is information about infant and toddler programs, programs for preschool-aged children, and programs for young school-aged children. Most of all, this book is for those who plan to or currently teach and care for young children. In most instances, this book would be selected as the textbook for an introductory early childhood education course.

Introduction to Early Childhood Education is also relevant for those who work in other capacities in early childhood education programs—administrators, parent education and engagement coordinators, curriculum coordinators, staff training consultants, and others.

PHILOSOPHY

This text is built on the underlying philosophy that the early childhood educator's most important task is to provide a program that is sensitive to and supports the development of young children. Only in a child-centered program—in which children are allowed to make choices, the guidelines are clear and logical, activities are planned to meet the needs of the individual children in the group and are sensitive to their cultural and family background, and adults are consistent and loving—will children flourish. A good early childhood experience can contribute immeasurably to helping children become responsible people who care about and show concern for others.

You will see this philosophy reflected throughout the book, in all chapters and on all topics.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

This book is divided into six parts and further subdivided into 16 chapters. The purpose of these six parts is to answer the questions "*What* is early childhood education?" "*Who* are the people involved in early childhood education?" "*Why* is early childhood education important?" "*Where* is early childhood education carried out?" and "*How* is early childhood education implemented?" (This last question comprises two parts in the text, on curriculum and guidance.) These questions are important ones as you gain insight into all aspects of early childhood education.

Within the 16 chapters, you will learn more about the scope of early childhood education and why it is needed (Chapter 1); the children, families, and teachers involved in early childhood education (Chapters 2 to 4); the history leading up to the field today, the theoretic rationale supporting it, and how theory is translated into specific types of programs (Chapter 5); the relevance of accountability,

standards, and assessment in carrying out programs (Chapter 6); helping children cope with stress in their lives (Chapter 7); the importance of the physical environment as the setting of early childhood education programs (Chapter 8); scheduling for and planning the curriculum (Chapter 9); contents of the curriculum as it supports children's creative, physical, cognitive, language, and social development (Chapters 10 to 14); guiding children through daily routines and in group activities (Chapter 15); and guiding individual children's social behaviors, including handling challenging behaviors (Chapter 16). These chapters provide a great deal of information about the basic components of early childhood education and working with young children. At the end of these chapters you will find a feature called Pulling It All Together: one day in the life of a classroom and the experiences of its children and teachers. This feature will give you the opportunity to pull together and apply everything you've learned in this text.

FROM THEORY AND RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Like most fields, early childhood education is built on theoretical ideas, concepts, and research that give it a strong and cohesive foundation. In Chapter 5, several key theories are introduced. Throughout the book, these are referred to with particular emphasis on making them relevant to work with young children. In addition, relevant research studies—some are the most up-to-date research and others are classics—are cited throughout the text to provide scientific validity to many of the practices and ideas of early childhood education. To help make theoretical and research information meaningful, actual examples of young children and their teachers are frequently provided.

These examples help make the contents of the book, especially theoretical and research information, take on meaning and come alive. As you read through the book and continue to come across names such as Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky, you will become familiar with these influential people and their ideas. They are important allies in an introduction to early childhood education because their contributions provide such valuable insights to our understanding of children.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION?

For those of you who are familiar with earlier editions of this book, you will notice one significant change: A new author, Dr. Melissa M. Burnham, has joined me in the task of providing the most updated information about the field of early childhood education. Dr. Burnham provides an extraordinary background and superb insights to this task. She contributes her in-depth knowledge of child development, an extensive understanding of brain architecture and application of the latest brain research to practice, deep comprehension of progressive models of education, and interaction with numerous university students who find her classes to be both challenging and enjoyable. She is also very active within the local public school community, with a commitment to infuse early childhood philosophies and practices across the entire age span of the early childhood years, from birth through age 8.

Following is a brief summary of some of the key highlights included in this new edition. You will find the eighth edition to be well updated and, in many places, more clearly organized.

- You will find that this eighth edition of *Introduction to Early Childhood Education* reflects the latest research, statistics, policy, and changes in the field of early childhood education to provide you with the most current information as you enter the field.
- All chapters now begin with very specific learning objectives, based on Bloom's taxonomy. This feature helps to better organize the chapters and tie the objectives to the main subsections as well as to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs.
- In-depth links, in all chapters, to these NAEYC standards, specify what one needs to know about early childhood education. At the beginning of each chapter is a listing of the standards

met in the chapter. In the Appendix, you will find a chart that indicates where each of the NAEYC standards is addressed in the book, noted by chapter and page number.

- The renamed feature, Brain Science, appears in each chapter of this edition and continues to provide information on some of the latest brain development research and discusses how and why this research is relevant to early childhood education practitioners.
- This edition also includes a thorough discussion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and STEAM (add arts to the acronym) in Chapters 10 and 12.
- In keeping with ever-changing technology, there is also considerably more discussion about this trend throughout the book.
- There are many other additions or expansions to topics covered in the book. A sampling of these includes updated discussion about community violence and how it impacts young children in Chapter 7, consideration of natural disasters in Chapter 7, expanded discussion of the theory of Lev Vygotsky and Tools of the Mind in Chapter 12, the addition of Dan Gartrell's guidance approach as well as of the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) in Chapter 16, examination of implicit bias in Chapter 4, and many others.

SPECIAL LEARNING FEATURES

As you begin to use this text, you will appreciate some of its features, which are designed to help you, the reader, master the material as thoroughly and efficiently as possible. Special elements within and at the end of each chapter are designed especially for students in a class, such as the one in which you are enrolled. Here is a sampling of these features:

- *Learning Objectives*. At the beginning of each chapter is a series of learning objectives that will prepare you for encountering the material that will be covered in the chapter.
- *Pairing learning objectives with NAEYC standards*. A summary of the standards discussed in each chapter appears at the beginning of the chapter. This listing alerts you to the standards that will be covered and where in the chapter they are discussed in more depth.
- *Chapter-opening quotation*. Each chapter begins with a quotation from the book *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) to underscore the importance of this topic. Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is one of the most important concepts in the field of early childhood education, and these quotes will help you make the connection between DAP and what you are reading.
- *Key definitions*. Important terms and concepts introduced in the book are defined within the text and highlighted in bold, aqua-colored text. This will help reinforce concepts and reinforce some of the important terminology used in the field of early childhood education. All definitions also appear again, in alphabetical order, at the back of the book in the glossary.
- *Take a Closer Look*. Each chapter provides this special feature, which offers in-depth information about a topic of importance to the field of early childhood education.
- *Stories From the Field*. In each chapter is a feature relating a story from an early childhood practitioner. These stories focus on a subject that is related to the chapter. These firsthand narratives provide insight into what makes working with young children meaningful to professionals.

- *Brain Science*. This feature ties the latest brain research to work with young children.
- *Working With Families*. At the end of most chapters, you will find a section that focuses on one of the important tasks of early childhood teachers—communicating, coordinating, and working with families. These special sections tie the topic of each chapter to the needs and interests of families. These features appear in addition to Chapter 3, which focuses specifically on families of young children. Parents and other family members are a vital and integral part of early childhood programs, and the focus on working with families in each chapter is intended to help highlight and strengthen this element.
- *Summary*. The main points of each chapter, in relation to the Learning Objectives, are provided in a brief summary at the end of each chapter for study and review.
- *Key Questions*. Important questions are posed at the end of each chapter to help readers consider the information from the chapter and to explore further its relevance. Some of the key questions suggest activities that will reinforce understanding of the topic.
- *Additional Resources*. At the end of each chapter is an updated listing of additional resources, including books and articles that contain information relevant to early childhood educators in relation to the topic of the chapter.

ACCOMPANYING SUPPLEMENTS

Online Instructor's Manual With Test Bank

An online instructor's manual accompanies this book. The instructor's manual contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including a sample syllabus, learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, and additional print and online resources. For assessment support, the updated test bank includes multiple-choice, true–false, and short-answer questions for each chapter.

Presentation Slides

Preassembled Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter cover content from the book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people continue to be supportive, facilitating the great commitments of time, energy, and resources that are needed in an undertaking such as the writing and revision of *Introduction to Early Childhood Education*. We would like to gratefully acknowledge their assistance, for without them, the original book through this eighth edition would not have been possible.

Eva would like to acknowledge good friends and colleagues such as Bill Evans, Sally Martin, Colleen Murray, Penny Royce-Rogers, Sharon Rogers, Leah Sanders, Barbara Thornton, Sherry Waugh, Katherine Zimmet, and many others have offered wonderful ideas and great support. She is particularly grateful to Dr. Alice Honig, professor emerita of Syracuse University, for her continued support and friendship and especially her helpful comments and suggestions.

Melissa would like to acknowledge the unwavering support of her family, and the fantastic early childhood education (ECE) students who have enriched her professional knowledge over the past 17 years. She is particularly grateful for the mentorship, collaboration, and friendship of Dr. Eva Essa, who has provided countless opportunities for her professional growth, including this endeavor.

We also want to thank the editorial staff at SAGE Publishing who have provided patient support and help in the development and production of this eighth edition—in particular, Kassi Radomski, Jennifer Jovin, Elizabeth You, Megan Markanich, Kelle Clarke, and Steve Scoble. We are particularly grateful for their meticulous editing and attention to detail, which have greatly enhanced this final product.

Finally, we want to recognize the contributions of the early childhood professionals whose experiences can be read in the Stories From the Field features that appear in each chapter of this book: Amanda Bonzell, Becky Carter-Steele, Arryell Davis, Jenna Dewar, Courtney Goodballet, Wendi Greenless, Maritza Herrera, Natsumi Horsley, Marci Hosier-Behmaram, Colin Kvasnicka, Kathryn Oxoby, Heike Rael, Shari Roberts, Gloria Rodarte, Leah Sanders, Mary Schuster, and Jamie Selby.

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Lisa White, Athens Technical College

In summary, we wish you, the reader, success as a current or future professional in the field of early childhood education. It is a field that is important and exciting, one that has much potential for growth. Early childhood professionals contribute a great deal to young children, their families, and the profession.

Best of luck!

Dr. Essa

Dr. Burnham

Reno, Nevada

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Eva L. Essa, PhD, recently retired as Foundation Professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she taught early childhood education and human development for 41 years. She received a PhD in developmental psychology from Utah State University in 1978, an MS in human development and family studies (HDFS) from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1971, and a BS in journalism from the University of Southern California in 1963. Dr. Essa's research and writing on topics related to early childhood education have been published in a variety of professional journals and books.

Melissa M. Burnham is the associate dean for the College of Education and professor of human development and family studies and early childhood education at the University of Nevada, Reno. She obtained her PhD in human development from the University of California, Davis, in 2002, her master's degree in human development and family studies (HDFS) from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1996, and her bachelor's degree in HDFS from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1994. She has been a faculty member with the HDFS program since the fall of 2001.

PART

I

THE WHAT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Each section of this book focuses on a different aspect of early childhood education, beginning with defining just what this field is. Part I addresses the *what* of early childhood education.

1 THE SCOPE OF AND NEED FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

NAEYC Standards Considered in Chapter 1

See the Standards Correlation Matrix in the Appendix.

- *Standard 1b:* Understanding the various family and social factors related to the rising need for child care as part of contemporary influence on early development and learning (See The Growth of Early Childhood Education.)
- *Standard 6e:* Introduction to advocacy as part of professionalism (See The Growth of Early Childhood Education.)
- *Standard 1c:* Familiarity with research-based elements of quality in early childhood programs as these contribute to creating appropriate environments for young children (See Defining Quality in Early Childhood Programs.)
- *Standard 6d:* Being aware of the complexity of the field, and future issues as part of this complexity (See The Future of Early Childhood Education.)

The purpose of [developmentally appropriate practice] is to promote excellence in early childhood education by providing a framework for best practice. Grounded both in the research on child development and learning and in the knowledge base regarding educational effectiveness, the framework outlines practice that promotes young children's optimal learning and development. (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 1)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Explain the importance of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and early childhood standards for teachers.

1.2 Discuss the societal factors that have contributed to the dramatic increase in programs for young children over the past few decades.

1.3 Describe the purposes and settings of early childhood programs, and categorize the age groups of children in these programs.

1.4 Identify the factors that must intersect to provide and sustain a good quality early childhood program.

1.5 Discuss the key issues related to early childhood education that may emerge in the future.

The profession you are exploring through this text and the course in which you are enrolled is **early childhood education** (see the Glossary on page 415 for a listing and definition of all key terms). Just what is this field? What does it encompass? What does it involve? Why is it important? What is its place in today's society? What is its future? There is so much to discuss about early childhood education, so much to share. As you begin learning about this field of study, the answers to some of these questions will gain greater significance and become more focused. This chapter presents an overview of the field of early childhood education. We begin this journey with a brief introduction to two basic principles of the field of early childhood education: developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, such as the academic program in which you are now enrolled. You will see both terms repeated throughout this book.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS

One of the core concepts of the field of early childhood education that will become increasingly relevant to you is the importance of matching practice with what we know about the development of young children. This fundamental principle is termed **developmentally appropriate practice (DAP**; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). DAP was developed collaboratively with input from many professionals by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the largest professional organization of early childhood educators in the country (we will discuss NAEYC more fully in Chapter 4).

The major basis for DAP is its compelling and lasting commitment to be a strong voice for children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). It reflects NAEYC's mission to promote programs for young children and their families that are of a high quality and that contribute positively to children's development. Decisions about what is good for children are based on a general knowledge of children's development and learning, understanding of each individual child in a group, and familiarity with the social and cultural contexts within which children are being raised. Throughout the remainder of this text, we will visit and revisit DAP in relation to the various topics we discuss, to emphasize its importance.

A second common thread that you will see throughout this book is the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (NAEYC, 2010). NAEYC is the most influential early childhood education organization in our country and, in that capacity, has partnered with other organizations to develop and define criteria that should be met by early childhood education academic preparation programs and the individuals who graduate from these programs. You will read more about this in Chapter 4.

> Research shows that when early childhood professionals have specialized training and education, children benefit. These standards describe what early childhood professionals are expected to know and do, defining essential learning outcomes in professional preparation programs and presenting a shared vision of excellence. (NAEYC, 2010, p. 9)

It is quite likely that the program in which you are enrolled follows these standards in the classes and other experiences in which students are involved. For this reason, each chapter will begin with an overview of which standards are covered within the chapter. The identified standards are also tied to the learning objectives for each chapter.

Let's begin with an in-depth look at the scope and need for early childhood education. We will examine early childhood education in terms of why the field has grown so rapidly in the past several decades, what is included in the field, how quality is defined in programs for young children, and what the future might hold.

THE GROWTH OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Although the importance and value of education in the early years of life has been acknowledged for more than 2,000 years (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000), relatively recent factors have brought early childhood education to the forefront of public awareness. Fundamental changes in the economy, family life, public awareness, and public support have had a profound effect on early childhood education. In recent years, media outlets have directed a spotlight on child care. Much of their focus has been on changes in family life that have brought about the need for child care outside the home. These changes include many complex factors such as a rising cost of living, an increased number of dual-income families, an increase in single-parent families, an increased number of teenage parents, greater mobility as families move more readily to different parts of the country, and a decrease in the impact of the extended family.

The needs of working families are not the only reason early childhood has been a public focus. Over the past several decades, the success of publicly funded programs such as Head Start has shown

us that high-quality early educational intervention can help to combat poverty and improve opportunities for children who may be at risk. There has also been increased attention to the needs of special populations of young children, for instance, children who are disabled, abused, or culturally different from the mainstream population. Note that in each chapter of this book, we will focus on the relevance of early childhood education to such children. In addition, recent research on the amazingly complex and rapid development of very young children's brains has given us further insight into the importance of the early years. Finally, many professionals are outspoken and eloquent advocates for the rights of children.

Changes in Family Life

"Typical" family life has changed considerably since the end of World War II. Demographic information indicates that increasing numbers of women are entering the workforce. No longer do most mothers stay at home to rear their young children. Economic necessity forces many families to rely on two paychecks because one simply does not provide for all of their financial needs. In other families, both parents work because of the desire for personal and professional development rather than because of economic need.

Whereas in 1950 only 12% of the mothers of children under 6 worked (Children's Defense Fund, 2000), by 2015 nearly 70% of mothers with children under age 18 were in the labor force (Working Mothers Issue Brief, 2016). This growth in the number of families in which both parents work has dramatically increased the need for child care.

Another family change that has affected the demand for child care is the increase in the number of single parents. Not long ago, the majority of single-parent families were created through divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). At the beginning of the millennium, 56% of the adult population was married and living with a spouse (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The 2016 census update indicates that now 69% of children live with two parents (Current Population Survey, 2016). However, there is another, more recent trend that is affecting such figures. Single Mother Statistics (2018) notes that "single motherhood is now becoming the new 'norm.'" Over the past decade, an increasing number of children was born outside of marriage. Of single women who have one or more children, 50% were never married, 29% were divorced, and 21% were separated or widowed.

In most instances, the divorced single parent who has custody of the children is the mother. A 2017 snapshot of single-mother families shows that 81.4% of single parent families are headed by a

BRAIN SCIENCE

LINKING QUALITY EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WITH BRAIN SCIENCE

The brain undergoes remarkable and continuous development after birth, and this development is particularly robust in the early childhood years. Most strikingly, brain cells—neurons—become increasingly interconnected, neurons themselves become more complex, and the connections between neurons become coated with a fatty substance—myelin—that speeds the communication between neurons (Lebel & Deoni, 2018). Another important component of brain development is the pruning that occurs as brain connections that are not used or needed are trimmed away (Huttenlocher, 1990). This pruning is completely normal and makes for a more efficient brain. Much like a good Wi-Fi signal, the speed of brain cell connections enables children to engage in increasingly complex thinking, activities, and skills (e.g., Barnea-Goraly et al., 2015). Indeed, all aspects of child development have as their source the developing brain. What's really cool is that the brain is not just developing on its own in a decontextualized skull. Instead, the brain actually relies on environmental inputs for its development. This is both a blessing (when the environment is filled with supportive, language-rich, interactive experiences) and a curse (when the environment is deprived, abusive, or neglectful; Shonkoff, 2017). So, early childhood teachers have the unique, and extremely important, ability to impact children's brain development. High-quality learning environments that include warm, sensitive, and responsive teachers; hands-on learning experiences; exposure to rich language; and protection from adversity set the brain on a positive trajectory and may have lifelong impacts (McCoy, 2016; Shonkoff, 2017).

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Today, an increasing number of women in their childbearing years are in the workforce. It is estimated that more than 60% of mothers of young children work, requiring some form of child care for their children. Experts predict a continuing rise in the percentage of working mothers and children requiring care.

mother. Nonetheless, an increasing number of fathers now gain custody or joint custody of their children. Not only will a single parent experience a significant decrease in income and standard of living but she or he will also, most likely, have to work (or work longer hours) to support the family. Of course, to work outside the home, the single parent needs to find appropriate child care. In addition, single parents as a group also include teen mothers, some still finishing their high school education. Today, far more teenage mothers opt to keep their babies than in past years. These children also need child care while their mothers are at school or work. Approximately two thirds of single mothers work outside the home. In 2016, the median income for single mothers was $35,400 while that figure jumped to $85,300 for married couples. Thus, single mothers are more likely to be poor than married-couple families (Single Mother Statistics, 2018).

A third change in family life is the increasing mobility of many of today's families. Work demands cause some families to move away from relatives who might otherwise provide support. Family mobility involving only the small **nuclear family** has contributed to the declining influence of the **extended family**, a network of relatives such as grandparents, uncles and aunts, or adult brothers and sisters beyond the immediate family. On the other hand, one report indicates that about 20% of young children are, in fact, in the care of their grandparents on a regular basis for some time each week (NACCRRA, 2008). Furthermore, the number of grandparents who have primary responsibility for the care of their grandchildren is increasing. Cancino (2016) notes that this increase is in part a response to the opioid epidemic.

Years ago, the most prevalent form of child care was that provided by a relative. Parental and relative care, combined, continue to be most widely used for infants and toddlers, although center care for this age group has been increasing, and is now the norm for almost half of all preschoolers (Capizzano, Adams, & Sonnenstein, 2000). By 2007, nearly two thirds of all children under age 6 were in nonparental care, with 36% in center-based care (Child Trends Data Bank, 2008). This change in family support is another reason for the increased demand for outside child care.

Changes such as increasing numbers of dual-income families and single-parent families, and a decline in the impact of the extended family, have dramatically raised the demand for child care and brought early childhood education to the forefront of public attention. "Child care is now as essential to family life as the automobile or the refrigerator. . . . [T]he majority of families, including those with infants, require child care to support parental employment" (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1990, p. 26).

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Research has shown that programs such as Head Start offer many positive benefits for children from low-income families.

Benefits of Early Childhood Education

The need for child care among working families makes early childhood education a topic of national prominence. However, this need is not the only reason for early childhood education's increasing importance. On a parallel track, there has been extensive discussion and research about the benefits of early education for special populations of children and families. Thus, children from low-income families, children who

have grown up with a language other than English, children with disabilities, and children at risk for other reasons have been enrolled in publicly funded programs. This trend has paralleled the increasing diversity of today's families in America. Diversity can be based on numerous elements, including nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, and exceptionality (Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2018).

Since the mid-1960s, federal, state, and local support has increased as a result of mounting evidence that high-quality early childhood programs can and do make a long-term difference that carries into adulthood. Researchers have concluded that good early childhood programs not only improve the lives of the children and families involved but also result in substantial economic benefits for society. Each chapter of this book includes a feature called Take a Closer Look. This feature in this chapter reviews some of the supporting research, especially from the field of economics. Although early intervention programs are expensive, their cost is more than recovered in subsequent years through greater success in school, decreased need for special education, lowered delinquency and arrest rates, and decreased welfare dependence (Barnett, 1996; Schweinhart, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). We will discuss more specific aspects of some of this research in Chapter 5.

Child Advocacy

A third factor that has brought early childhood education into the public consciousness is the urgency with which many professionals view the plight of increasing numbers of children and families. Of particular concern are the many families that face abject poverty, lacking the most basic necessities. Yet the social problems reach beyond the needs of the poor, to working parents with moderate incomes who are beset by the scarcity of affordable, high-quality care. Dr. T. Berry Brazelton (1990), a well-known pediatrician and child advocate, concludes that America is failing its children because they are subject to more deprivations than any other segment of society. A large number of children live in poverty. *Yearbook 2011: The State of America's Children* reports that 18% of children in America are poor and that African American and Latino children are 3 times as likely to be poor as white children. The poverty rate for children grew by almost 20% over the first decade of the new millennium (Children's Defense Fund, 2011). Further compounding the gravity of such statistics is that two thirds of cuts in the proposed federal budget come from programs for low- and moderate-income people (Shapiro, Kogan, & Cho, 2017).

In its report on child poverty in America, the Children's Defense Fund (2018a) expresses deep concern about the number of children who grow up in poverty:

> This is a very challenging and scary time for America's children. As new policies threaten to eliminate the safety net that millions rely on to survive, the reality is millions of America's children today are still suffering from hunger, homelessness and hopelessness.

Organizations such as the Children's Defense Fund and the NAEYC view these concerns as social justice issues and actively advocate children's rights. Their frequent lobbying for children's rights through **child advocacy** in the nation's capital has promoted legislation related to child care, mandatory education for children with disabilities, Head Start, health care for poor children, and other vital services.

The needs of children and families have come to the attention of both political leaders and the public through the astute efforts of those dedicated to advocating the rights of children, including early childhood professionals. But there is a continuing need to promote a common concern for the welfare of all children. Based on current trends, researchers predict that the problems facing children and families will intensify, the gap between the well-to-do and the poor will widen, and the number of children who grow up in poverty will increase (Children's Defense Fund, 2016). In addition, recent actions by the U.S. Congress and the president may imperil such children even more, since these changes include "unprecedented cuts" to programs that support the health, nutritional, and educational well-being of poor children and families (Alcindor, 2017).

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

CHILD CARE—A WISE ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

For a number of decades, some early childhood researchers have argued that high-quality child care is a good economic investment in our country's future. This argument has taken on new urgency in recent years as scientists from a variety of fields try to address some of the many issues that face our nation. The report from an important conference about this topic concludes that "investments in quality child care and early education do more than pay significant returns to children—our future citizens. They also benefit taxpayers and enhance economic vitality" (Calman & Tarr-Whelan, 2005, p. 1).

One of the most notable proponents of the importance of public investment in early childhood education is James Heckman, a Nobel Prize–winning economist. Considered among the 10 most influential economists in the world, Heckman launched the Pritzker Consortium on Early Childhood Development at the University of Chicago in order to bring together leading experts to identify how best to invest in young children in a way that will pay off for society. The consortium's goal is to "identify the most important development opportunities for children 5 years and younger, and to transform the way society and the business community view investments in early childhood education. We owe it to ourselves and our nation to make this a priority now" (Heckman, as quoted in Harms, 2006b, p. 1).

Heckman's research shows that support for high-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children would raise high school graduation rates from 41% to 65% and college enrollment from 4.5% to 12%. However, if this support were sustained beyond the early years—through the remainder of childhood and adolescence—the combined intervention would result in high school graduation rates of 90% and college attendance of 37%. The payoff for society would be an improved workforce, the mainstay of the economy. Heckman sees childhood as "a multistage process where early investments feed into later investments. Skill begets skill; learning begets learning" (as quoted in Harms, 2006a, p. 1).

Recognition of the importance of the early years has been echoed by other well-known leaders, including the former chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke. Bernanke noted this:

> Although education and the acquisition of skills is a lifelong process, starting early in life is crucial. Recent research . . . has documented the high returns that early childhood programs can pay in terms of subsequent educational attainment and in lower rates of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. The most successful early childhood programs appear to be those that cultivate both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and that engage families in stimulating learning at home. (Bernanke, 2007, pp. 4–5)

The value of early intervention for children living in poverty is not new, however. Much of this recent interest stems from research that was begun many decades ago. Probably the most widely cited study is the Perry Preschool Project, which followed a group of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds from 1962 to the present day. As children, this group received high-quality early childhood education, augmented by considerable family involvement. A second group of children, who had the same characteristics but did not participate in the early childhood program, has also been followed through the years. The most recent report of these children who had been included in the intervention program and who are now in mid-adulthood shows continuing long-lasting effects of high-quality early education. More of the group who were involved in early education, as compared with those who were not, were employed at age 40, had higher earnings, had graduated from high school, and had significantly fewer arrests. An economic comparison of the cost of early intervention to savings in costs for special education services, welfare, and prison show that for every dollar invested in early care and education there is a $17 savings to society (Schweinhart et al., 2005).

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

We have looked at some of the concerns that have made early childhood education, as one aspect of the needs and welfare of young children, a current issue. But *early childhood education* is a broad term and includes a variety of approaches and programs. We will now examine some of the ways in which this term is used and some of the classifications into which programs can be grouped.

Purpose of Programs

We have already touched on some basic differences in programs that stem from their underlying thrust. The major purpose of many programs is to care for children while their families work. The rapid rise in the number of children in full-time day care, either in child care centers or in family child care homes, has paralleled the increasing prevalence of working mothers. The primary goal of child care programs is to provide safe and nurturing care in a developmentally appropriate setting for children.

Enrichment is a second aim, evident particularly in part-time preschools. Such programs usually include specific activities to enhance socialization, cognitive skills, or the overall development of young children. The underlying notion is that children will benefit from experiences that they may not receive at home—for instance, participating in group activities, playing with a group of agemates, or learning specific concepts from specially trained teachers. Some programs aim at accelerating aspects of children's development (especially in academic areas) through didactic activities—ones that have high teacher control. Early childhood professionals do not consider such an approach as enriching or as developmentally appropriate (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995).

A third major purpose, found particularly in publicly funded programs, is compensation. Compensatory programs are designed to make up for some lack in children's backgrounds. The basic philosophy of programs such as Head Start is to provide experiences that will help children enter the mainstream of society more successfully. Such experiences include a range of services that encompass early childhood education, health and dental care, nutrition, and parent education.

These categories, although descriptive of some underlying differences among programs, are not mutually exclusive. Few child care centers are concerned with only the physical well-being and care of children. Most also provide enriching experiences that further children's development. At the same time, preschool programs have to be concerned with appropriate nurturing and safety while the children are in their care. Similarly, compensatory programs are also concerned with enriching experiences and caring for children, whereas child care or preschool programs may serve to compensate for something lacking in the backgrounds of some of the children. In fact, many Head Start programs now are offering wraparound services to provide extended care for children of working families.

Program Settings

Programs for young children can be divided into home-based and center-based settings. In the United States, when all ages of children are considered, the largest number of children are cared for in center-based facilities. The National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC, 2011) estimates that nearly half of young children are cared for by a relative, about one fourth are cared for in center-based programs, about 16% in a family child care home setting, and the remainder in some other type or arrangement.

Family child care homes are a significant part of the child care market. Because they provide a flexible, home-based care arrangement, it is often convenient for parents (Morissey & Banghart, 2007). In most states, licensing regulations allow for up to six children to be cared for in a family child care home, although there is some variation. Family child care providers are often mothers of young children themselves and care for their own children along with several others. They tend to serve more infants and toddlers than preschoolers because many families prefer this type of care for younger children while being more likely to select center-based care for preschoolers and primary school–age children. Studies have concluded that quality is lower in family child care homes than in center-based care. In particular, the quality in unlicensed homes tends to be even lower (Morissey & Banghart, 2007). It is difficult to get accurate information about family child care homes and the children and families who use this form of care because unlicensed homes operate under the radar of licensing agencies.

kate_sept2004/E+/Getty Images

Many young children are cared for in family child care homes rather than in center-based care facilities. Typically, family child care homes have children of various ages, spanning infancy through the preschool and primary years.

Center-based programs are located in early childhood centers and usually include larger groups of children than do home-based programs. Center-based programs have had the greatest increase among the

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Center-based infant and toddler programs are among the fastest-growing segment of child care programs today.

types of programs offered in the United States. In the 1960s, only about 6% of young children were cared for in centers (Capizzano et al., 2000). By 2006, 60% of children were in some kind of center-based care. The number of children in center-based care increases by age, with 28% of infants, 43% of toddlers, and 78% of preschoolers in centers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008).

Ages of Children

Another way early childhood programs can be grouped is by the age of the children. The classification of early childhood spans from birth to 8 years, which includes infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners, and children in the primary grades. Needless to say, working families need care for children of all of these ages.

Infants and Toddlers

One of the greatest increases we have seen has been in infant and toddler programs. Whereas in the 1970s, less than one third of infants and toddlers had a working mother, by the turn of the century that figure increased to about 60% (Phillips & Adams, 2001). Center-based care for infants and toddlers represents the fastest-growing type of program, though the majority of children under age 3 are cared for in family child care homes or by a relative (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Across the country, child care centers have been converting parts of their facilities to care for infants and toddlers, and many states have incorporated new sections in licensing standards to consider the special needs of this youngest segment of the population.

Not all infant or toddler programs fall under the rubric of child care, however. A number of compensatory programs enroll children from infancy, starting with early parent–child education as a way of intervening in the poverty cycle. Notable is the Early Head Start program for children under the age of 3.

Preschoolers

The largest segment of children in early childhood programs are preschool-age, including youngsters from 2 or 3 years of age until they begin formal schooling. Some programs consider the preschool period as beginning at age 3; others enroll children once they are out of diapers.

Programs for this age group include a wide variety of options. The majority of preschoolers are in all-day programs that provide care while their families work. Some children attend part-day preschool or nursery school programs for social and educational enrichment. We will examine more specific components of DAP for preschoolers in later chapters.

Kindergarten and Primary Children

Many definitions of early childhood include children up to age 8. Thus, directions for curriculum, teaching strategies, and the environment in kindergartens and primary classrooms derive from what is known about the development and mode of learning of young, school-age children.

DAP for this age group, just as for earlier ages, involves an integrated approach. **Integrated curriculum** acknowledges the importance of all aspects of human development—social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language, and creative—rather than focusing primarily on the cognitive. It also involves learning experiences that promote all aspects of development rather than separating the day into discrete times, such as for math, reading, physical education, or social studies. Through the use of learning centers (to be discussed in Chapter 8) and projects or themes (Chapter 9), such subjects are fully integrated and each is considered an inseparable part of the other (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Before- and After-School Care

Young school-age children whose families work full time also require care when they are not in school. This is often provided through before- and after-school programs and full-day holiday and summer care. Such programs generally focus on recreation rather than education, particularly self-directed and self-initiated activities, since the children spend the bulk of their day in school (Bumgarner & Haughey, 2016).

While many young children are enrolled in such programs, millions of others, labeled **latchkey children**, or **self-care children**, return to an empty home after school. Concerns about the safety, vulnerability, and lack of judgment of young school-age children have prompted an increase in before- and after-school programs. Most states do not set an age limit below which children should not be left alone, though the National SAFE KIDS Campaign suggests age 12 (Database Systems Corporation, 2009).

Sources of Support for Programs

Yet another way of grouping early childhood programs is by the base of their support, especially financial. Many early childhood programs are privately owned, for-profit businesses, whereas others are not-for-profit enterprises operated through public funds or sponsored by an agency or church. A growing number of early childhood programs are also supported by employers.

For-Profit Programs

A majority of child care programs are operated for profit, either as a single, independently owned business or as part of a regional or national chain. For many years, the majority of child care in most American communities was provided by local owners who operated one or two centers. Today, however, child care chains, which have experienced tremendous growth, have moved into virtually every metropolitan area. The number of privately owned child care facilities has increased considerably in recent years. In 1987, there were more than a quarter million such facilities in the United States, but 20 years later that figure increased to more than three quarter million (Biery, 2014). Child care chains are big business! Some even sell stock that is traded on the New York Stock Exchange, deal in mergers and takeovers, and use sophisticated marketing strategies.

Not-for-Profit Programs

In for-profit early childhood programs, what is left over after expenses are paid is considered profit, which goes back to the owner or stockholders. In not-for-profit programs, such monies are incorporated back into the program or are returned to the sponsoring agency. Not-for-profit centers gain that status through incorporation or sponsorship from an entity that is itself not operated for profit. Churches are the most common sponsors of early childhood programs, and other groups, such as YMCAs, YWCAs, city recreation departments, hospitals, colleges, and universities, also are frequently sponsors.

Many religion-sponsored programs came into existence in the 1970s and 1980s. Often, religious buildings included nursery, preschool, or recreational rooms that were used primarily on the day of worship. As the need for child care for working families became a more pressing social concern, many religious groups responded to that need by opening their facilities during the week. Some such programs are affiliated with and incorporate their religion, but many are secular.

Employer-Supported Programs

One of the fastest-growing groups with a stake in early childhood programs is employers. Many companies have found that their interest in the needs and concerns of parent–employees has resulted in a more productive and stable workforce. For the working parents of young children, work and family are not separable and, in fact, often overlap. Child care, in particular, is not just a family issue but is also a concern to employers. Employees with young children, as compared with other workers, more often are late for work, leave work early, miss work altogether, and deal with personal issues while at work. When employers support child care in some way, the result is lower absenteeism, greater stability and

Ken Glaser/Corbis/Getty Images

There are many not-for-profit programs, which are sponsored by entities such as churches, city recreation departments, hospitals, colleges and universities, and YMCA or YWCA organizations. The fact that the sponsor does not operate for-profit gives child care centers sponsored by such groups not-for-profit status.

loyalty, better morale, decreased stress, less distraction, decreased employee turnover, and increased productivity among their employees (Bright Horizons, 2018).

There are many ways in which employers can support their workers' child care needs. Some large companies have created child care centers in or near the workplace. Another way in which employers help their workers is through arrangements with community child care centers, for instance, through a voucher system or direct subsidies. Such an arrangement can ensure that employees are given priority when child care openings are available.

Other employers provide referral services to help match employees' needs with resources available in the community. Some companies have helped develop and train a community network of family child care homes to meet their workers' needs. A growing trend among employers is to provide more responsive scheduling options, for instance, job sharing or flextime. Child care is increasingly becoming a benefits option as companies allow their employees to select from a menu rather than providing a common benefits package for all. Some companies, recognizing the significant problem posed by children who are mildly ill, have begun to explore sick-child care options (Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2008) found that nearly half of employers offered some kind of dependent assistance, about one third offered child care resource and referral services, and 9% offered child care at or near the worksite.

As an increasing number of companies provide employer-sponsored child care for their workers, a recent trend has been the rise of employer child care management organizations. Such organizations contract with businesses to provide child care services for their employees. The best known of these management organizations is Bright Horizons Family Solutions, which manages hundreds of centers across the country, including for many top American companies.

University- and College-Affiliated Programs

A sizable group of early childhood programs is linked to higher education. The institution in which you are enrolled may, in fact, have such a program. Some are specifically laboratory or training programs that support student practicums and provide subjects for research; others serve primarily as campus child care centers for the young children of students, staff, and faculty. The trend since the 1980s has been for campus programs to combine these two functions, offering child care to the campus community while using the children and families for practicum and research purposes (Everts, Essa, Cheney, & McKee, 1993).

Such programs are operated either as a campuswide venture or are affiliated with a specific department or unit, for instance, early childhood education, child development, or psychology. Because of the involvement of professional educators, campus programs are generally of high quality, incorporating what has been learned about young children and early childhood programs through research, theory, and professional practice.

Publicly Supported Programs

Another significant supporter of early childhood programs is the public sector, whether it is federal government, state, or local agencies. Head Start is probably the best-known federally supported program. In addition, Child Care and Development Fund block grants allow states to provide child care support for low-income working families. There are also federally subsidized early childhood programs on numerous U.S. military bases around the world. We will discuss Head Start, public school preschools, and military child care in more detail.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MEETING MULTIPLE NEEDS

Marci, Campus Child Care Connections Program Coordinator

Sometimes finding quality child care is difficult and challenging, especially for new parents. I support parents in their quest for the best possible child care setting for their child by offering resources and referrals. I help parents with their search by providing various options for care as well as finding a good match.

It's especially difficult to find quality child care for infants and toddlers. One wonderful resource for families that some aren't aware of is family child care. Family child caregivers provide a nurturing environment for young children but are often isolated from other early childhood professionals. Hence, my job is to develop professional support systems for family child care providers through financial assistance, information, monthly child care trainings and visits, program planning, and technical assistance. The services provided help to encourage higher quality in family child care. I also help family child care providers through the process of accreditation, which in turn helps me validate the quality of their individual programs. With this help, there are now several providers in our state who are accredited, and more are currently in the process of becoming so.

Helping parents find the right match for their family is extremely important if the child is to have continuity of care. I need to make sure parents have the right information so they can be sure they are choosing the best possible child care placement for their child. We try to educate parents and collect all the pertinent information regarding a parent's needs. We provide various brochures, numerous checklists parents use while visiting a center or family child care provider, videos, and conversations with staff. After much discussion, the parents can rest assured they have made the best possible child care choice for their child.

I am confident that by providing family child care providers with access to networks of other providers, they won't feel isolated and alone. They can provide high-quality care for children as well as meet the rising demand for infant and toddler child care slots. This arrangement results in a win–win situation: Parents can find the best-quality program for their young children, and child care providers are supported in developing high-quality programs.

Head Start

In 1964, in response to a growing concern about the perceived disadvantage at which many children from impoverished environments entered elementary school, Project Head Start was initiated. The goal of Head Start was to help break the poverty cycle by providing children and their families with a comprehensive program that would help meet some of their needs. Today, there are Head Start programs in every state and territory, in rural and urban sectors, on Native American reservations, and in migrant areas. Head Start serves 1.1 million children between birth and age 5 (Head Start Program Fact Sheet Fiscal Year 2016); it is estimated that this figure represents only 31% of eligible preschoolers and 6% of eligible infants and toddlers (National Head Start Association, 2016). Altogether, Head Start has enrolled more than 34 million children since its inception in 1965 (National Head Start Association, 2016).

Although Head Start is an education program aimed at providing a high-quality early childhood experience for 3- to 5-year-olds, it also has several other components. An important element is the provision of health care through medical, dental, nutritional, and mental health services for all of its children, recognizing that children who are hungry or ill cannot learn. All children receive medical and dental examinations, immunizations, a minimum of one hot meal and a snack each day, and the services of a mental health specialist if needed.

Family partnership is also an integral element of the Head Start program. Many parents have found employment through the program because it gives them priority for any available nonprofessional Head Start jobs. Another component involves social services for families to provide assistance, information about community resources, referrals, and crisis intervention. Finally, *Head Start*

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More than 1 million children are served every year through Head Start programs, but it is estimated that this program serves less than half of eligible children.

programs are mandated to serve *children with disabilities*, no matter the family's income. Ten percent of program enrollment is reserved for *children with disabilities* (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center [ECLK], 2017).

Since 1994, Head Start has also begun to serve children under the age of 3. The Early Head Start program provides child development and family services to pregnant women and low-income families with infants and toddlers. Early Head Start was developed in response to the growing recognition of the importance of the earliest years of children's lives and in acknowledgment of the woeful lack of infant and toddler care in most communities. Some Early Head Start programs provide center-based services, while others rely more on home visitation and support. The goals of the program are to enhance children's development (including health, social competence, cognitive and language ability, and resilience); support family development (including parenting, economic self-sufficiency, and family stability); support staff development (for instance, by providing training and educational opportunities); and support community development. About 10% of children served by a Head Start program are enrolled in Early Head Start (Head Start Program Fact Sheet, 2010). Early Head Start, like Head Start, mandates continuing staff training and education. Educational requirements for Head Start staff will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

State and Public School Involvement

Current funding for early childhood education programs comes from a wider range of sources than ever before. A majority of states allocate funding out of their budgets for early childhood programs. The number of state-funded prekindergarten programs have increased dramatically over the past two decades. Most of these programs are part-day, part-year programs designed for 4-year-olds who are identified as having some risk factors that might keep them from being successful when they start formal schooling.

Such programs are offered either within public school systems or through a combination of public and private settings. Public schools have, of course, always been the providers of kindergarten and first- and second-grade programs; children in these classes have, by definition, been included in early childhood programs, as a category. Increasingly numbers of school districts are extending their programs to preschoolers. In another way, public schools have, for many years, provided early childhood centers as part of high school or vocational school training programs.

Public school sponsorship of early childhood programs is, of course, subject to the same limited supply of money that constrains other publicly supported programs. Typically, therefore, existing programs serve a limited number of children. In most states, such programs give priority to children who are considered at risk for school failure. Some states specify low-income children, while others indicate that participants have to be Head Start–eligible. This focus on poor children or children at risk is, in large measure, a response to the number of children who are eligible for Head Start but are not included in that program. Some states provide programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, although the majority are structured to serve only 4-year-olds. In a few states, prekindergarten programs are designed for children who come from non-English-speaking families. Educators, however, are calling for a broader constituency in public school early childhood programs—one that includes all children rather than only a limited group.

Child Care in the Military

The U.S. Department of Defense oversees 800 Child Development Centers on military bases around the world (Bushatz, 2018). According to Floyd and Phillips (2013), the Department of Defense has

heavily invested in its child care programs, recognizing the importance of providing high-quality care for the children of service members as "a key component of combat readiness" (Floyd & Phillips, 2013, p. 79). Military child care is the largest employer-operated child care system in the country. The National Women's Law Center (Pomper, Blank, Campbell, & Schulman, 2004) published a follow-up report on military child care and held up the military as a model for ways to improve civilian child care. The report identified a number of ways that improvements have been brought about in the military child care system to promote high-quality care. These include a certification and inspection system that ensures that programs maintain basic standards, a program accreditation requirement that moves programs to a higher level of quality, and caregiver training and wages that improve staff quality and stability.

DEFINING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Up to this point, we have discussed early childhood programs in fairly concrete, descriptive terms, looking at characteristics by which programs can be grouped. Programs can and should also be examined in terms of how they best meet the needs and consider the well-being of children. Such considerations are related to quality.

Current research, in fact, focuses on identifying factors that create good early childhood programming for young children. The old questions about whether child care is good or bad for children or what type of care is best are now obsolete; today's research questions seek to find out how to make child care better for young children, providing empirical support for the factors commonly cited as indicators of good programs. The emerging picture tells us that quality in child care is not dependent on single, separable factors but is a result of the presence of and interaction among a variety of complex elements (Burchinal, 2017; Essa & Burnham, 2001; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000a). The research about high-quality early childhood care is also reflected in some important documents that guide the field, for instance *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and the Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (NAEYC, 2010), both of which were introduced earlier in this chapter.

How Do We Measure Quality?

Research on child care quality examines the impact of a variety of factors on child outcomes; in other words, do children score better on various developmental measures if they had been enrolled in a program with identified characteristics of quality than in a program without such features. In various studies of child care quality, such factors have been divided into two categories: structural and process. **Structural quality** includes characteristics that could be viewed as more indirect, such as the adult-to-child ratio, group size, and teachers' education. **Process quality**, on the other hand, is dynamic, including the interactions between children and adults in the early childhood setting, both in relation to the emotional support that adults provide children and the purposeful, intentional nature of their teaching. A large body of research has shown that process variables are directly related to children's outcomes while structural elements are more indirectly related. Furthermore, Burchinal (2017) notes that structural quality contributes to but, by itself, is not sufficient for identifying a program as having high quality; process elements are a necessary component.

Structural Quality Elements

Structural quality includes program characteristics that do not rely on interactions but features that tend to be more static and more easily measured. We will examine three of these structural elements in a bit more detail.

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An optimal ratio of adults to children is one indicator of quality in early childhood programs. A low ratio facilitates interaction and allows for more individualized attention to each child. According to research and the advice of experts, what is an inappropriate ratio for young children? What other factors are important in determining an appropriate ratio?

Child–Adult Ratio

It is generally assumed that when caregivers are responsible for a large number of children, the quality of care is adversely affected. **Child–adult ratio** has been widely studied over a number of decades. A number of studies have found the ratio of adults to children significantly affects children's behavior and child–adult interaction (Helburn & Howes, 1996; Howes, 1997). Furthermore, there is more verbal interaction between adults and children than when adults are responsible for fewer children. Teachers are not able to provide the individualized attention young children need when there is a higher ratio of children to adults.

What is an appropriate child–adult ratio? There is no definitive answer, but the NAEYC suggests the following guidelines, which are based on research and in line with DAP: a ratio of 3 to 1 for infants, 6 to 1 for toddlers, 8 to 1 for 3-year-olds, 10 to 1 for 4- and 5-year-olds, and 15-18 to 1 for children in the primary grades (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Group Size

In the late 1970s, the large-scale National Day Care Study (Roupp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979) indicated that group size was one of two consistently important variables that define quality of care for young children. In smaller groups, adults and children interacted more; children were more cooperative, innovative, and verbal; and children earned better scores on cognitive and language tests. Clarke-Stewart (1987) and Howes (1983) further found that children had greater social competence and adults were more responsive when group size was moderate.

Ideal group size cannot really be defined because other variables, including the parameters of the physical environment, need to be considered. NAEYC, through its DAP, provides some guidelines. For very young preschoolers, the association recommends no more than 12 children per group with two teachers. For 4- and 5-year-olds, NAEYC recommends a maximum group size of 20 children with two teachers.

Staff Qualifications

In the previous paragraph, we noted that the National Day Care Study (Roupp et al., 1979) found group size to be one of two important variables that define high-quality early childhood programs. The second factor these researchers found to be associated with high-quality early childhood programs was the importance of a staff with specific training in early childhood education and development. Such teachers engaged in more interactions with the children, and the children showed greater social and cognitive abilities, as compared with those teachers who lacked such training. In addition, teachers with early childhood training were rated as more positive and less punitive, using a less authoritarian style of interaction with the children (Arnett, 1987).

Process Quality Elements

Process quality includes such teacher characteristics as sensitivity and responsiveness; intentional teaching, including setting of appropriate goals; using a curriculum for teaching; keeping track of children's progress and using this information to plan appropriate activities to match each child's ability level; and developing strong relationships with families (NAEYC, 2010). In short, the quality of early childhood programs is very much dependent on the quality of the interactions between teachers and children. In high-quality programs, teachers support children's social and emotional development and engage in intentional teaching in developmentally appropriate ways. A large body of research supports

such characteristics as being related to quality in early childhood programs.

In response to this research and supported by child development theories (which we will discuss in much more detail in Chapter 5), researchers developed a system to measure quality (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2018). The **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)** assesses the quality of teacher–student interactions in programs serving infants and toddlers through 12th grade. CLASS examines elements of teaching that can be tied to students' achievement and development. "CLASS™ is the only observational teacher-assessment tool that captures teacher behaviors linked to students' gains and that has been proven to work in tens of thousands of classrooms, from preschool to high school and beyond" (Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, 2018).

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Warm, responsive interaction among adults and children is an important element in defining quality in early childhood programs.

The dimensions of the CLASS provide an effective list of features that define programs of high quality. These characteristics are divided into three domains: social and emotional supports, organizational and management supports, and instructional supports. Within each of these broad groupings are more descriptive aspects that are observable and measurable. Let's consider each of these three in more detail so you can gain a better awareness of what "quality" means.

Social and Emotional Supports

The relationships and connections among children and teachers are highly important. A positive classroom climate is reflected by children and adults who are clearly enthusiastic and enjoy their interactions and activities. Teachers are sensitive, responding consistently to the children's needs, questions, and ideas. Teachers are aware of the abilities of individual children and provide appropriate support for all children. Teachers also value student ideas and viewpoints and help them value each other's thoughts as well.

Organizational and Management Supports

A well-managed and organized classroom is an indicator of a competent teacher who supports development of self-regulation skills in the children. Rules and expectations are clear and consistent and rely on positive techniques such as redirection and prevention. Children understand what behaviors are expected because these are reinforced often. Another characteristic of a high-quality classroom is the productivity that can be seen in its well-defined activities. Expectations are clear, and materials are prepared ahead and ready for each activity. In addition, the teacher uses effective strategies to engage the children. Instructions for activities are present in a variety of modalities, such as visual, oral, or kinesthetic. Such strategies are evident in large group, small group, and one-on-one activities.

Instructional Supports

Teachers in high-quality classrooms use a variety of strategies to help children understand the facts, concepts, and principles of relevant subject areas. These do not rely merely on memorization but on deeper understanding. Learning in this way can include reasoning, integration, hypothesis testing, and other higher order thinking skills. In other words, the teacher does not merely present information to the children but supports strategies that allow the children themselves to discover and internalize information as they learn about the topic. Effective teachers also build new knowledge and understanding on what the children already know and incorporate opportunities for children to practice new skills. In addition, children are given frequent feedback, which focuses on the process of learning rather than on getting the correct answer. Finally, effective teachers incorporate more complex verbal

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A physical environment that is child-centered, organized, and stimulating is integral to the overall quality of a program.

communication into their teaching. They do this by encouraging and responding to children verbal explanations, expanding on what children say, introducing new vocabulary, and asking thoughtful follow-up questions.

As you can see, an effective teacher is at the core of a high-quality program. Such a teacher provides a classroom environment that is safe and nurturing, allowing the children to focus on learning. The classroom is also well organized and well managed. Children understand and abide by the rules, which are logical and reasonable. Activities for each day are thoughtfully planned ahead of time and materials are prepared and available. The effective teacher also provides numerous ways for children to utilize various thinking skills that do not involve simple rote memorization but instead involve reasoning and integration. If you were to walk into a classroom led by a teacher such as the one described here, you would find yourself in a welcoming place where learning is exciting and enjoyable and where participants are engaged and excited about their involvement.

Quality as a Combination of Factors

For the purpose of discussion, we have isolated factors associated with high-quality early childhood programs into discrete topics and further identified them as either structural or process quality. It is important to keep in mind, however, that quality can best be understood and studied as a combination of components. As you further your understanding and knowledge of the field of early childhood education, remember that quality is not defined by a single factor but depends on the complex interaction of a variety of elements in which you, as an early childhood professional, play a key role.

THE FUTURE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Up to this point, we have examined social forces that have helped to shape the field of early childhood education, looked at the multifaceted descriptors that define the field today, and examined qualitative aspects of programs for young children. But what lies ahead? Are there more changes in store? Following are some predictors, based on a variety of indicators and trends.

- From all economic and social indications, it is reasonable to expect that a high percentage of families will continue to have two parents in the workforce and continue to need care for their young children.
- Employment opportunities in early childhood education will continue to increase. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) projections indicate that the need for both child care workers and elementary teachers will increase by 7% by the year 2026.
- According to the Children's Defense Fund (2018a), the U.S. Census Bureau reported recently that in 2016 the child poverty rate declined by approximately 1 million children, a very significant decrease. This represents a poverty rate of 18%, compared to the 19.7% of the previous year. The 2016 decline, however, may well be reversed by current budget proposals which plan cuts to social support programs.
- Federal and state funding for programs such as Head Start and local and state allocations to serve children at risk, along with programs and job opportunities for teachers of young

children, have experienced moderate increases over the years. However, a national economic downturn may mean less funding. In addition, recent legislation may well signal a reversal of that trend.

- An increasing number of children from families whose first language is not English will be served by early childhood programs, increasing the need for bilingual and bicultural teachers.
- Employer involvement in child care sponsorship is likely to increase as employers recognize the need to provide child care benefits for parents. A shift in the types of program sponsorship, along with new job opportunities, is likely to accompany such a trend.
- Although the number of available positions for early childhood professionals will continue to increase, there are nevertheless grave concerns about the stability of the early childhood workforce. In no other industry is there such a high turnover of employees as in child care.
- Stability of staff is an important element in the quality of early childhood programs because children's trust and attachment to the adults in their lives depends on that stability. As a result, there has been increasing concern about the interplay between the needs of children for quality care, the needs of families for affordable child care, and the needs of early childhood professionals for appropriate compensation and status. We can expect greater focus on these issues in the future.
- In recent years, many states have undertaken initiatives aimed at bolstering the professional development of those who work in the field of early childhood education. We will discuss these initiatives further in Chapter 4.
- It is becoming more and more apparent that our country lacks a cohesive and consolidated social policy within which to consider child and family matters. For instance, a wide variety of agencies initiate, license, administer, and evaluate varying programs for children and families, often relying on disparate philosophies, approaches, and regulations. But, at the same time, because of increased public attention, there also seems to be greater willingness to address such issues with more depth, integration, and forethought.
- As a result, professional organizations are placing greater emphasis on the need to develop a system for financing early childhood education in the United States. Helburn (2003) argues that only the federal government has the ability to provide funding for a cohesive system of child care through which all American children are covered.
- Recent legislation has placed increased emphasis on accountability and assessment of young children, an issue we will discuss further in Chapter 6. Programs that receive federal funding, such as Head Start, have experienced greater pressure to demonstrate that they are making a difference in children's development, particularly in areas related to school readiness.
- Publicly funded programs for young children, including many Head Start, Early Head Start, and kindergarten programs, often are operated only on a part-day basis. Such scheduling is problematic for working parents who need full-day care for their children. Despite limited funding, efforts will need to be made to deliver more wraparound services that provide extended hours for children who participate in a part-day program such as Head Start and Early Head Start.
- Within the early childhood profession, there is a continued focus on the pluralistic nature of our society and the shrinking world in which children are growing up. Many early childhood programs can be expected to focus more than ever on curriculum based on non-bias and the inclusion of children and families from different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and religious backgrounds, as well as children with disabilities. We will explore this topic in more detail in Chapter 13.

- Finally, because of legislation ensuring that young children with disabilities are included in early education, there will be continued efforts to integrate them into programs with children who do not have disabilities. As we will see in Chapter 2, such inclusive programs benefit everyone involved.

SUMMARY

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Early Childhood Standards

Learning Objective 1.1. Explain the importance of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and early childhood standards for teachers.

Two central professional concepts in the field of early childhood education are DAP, a set of principles about how to teach young children that is based on an understanding of child development and a familiarity with the cultural context within which each child is being raised, and Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs.

The Growth of Early Childhood Education

Learning Objective 1.2. Discuss the societal factors that have contributed to the dramatic increase in programs for young children over the past few decades.

A number of social factors have contributed to the expansion of early childhood programs and have brought early childhood education into the public consciousness. These factors include the following:

1. Changes in family life such as an increased number of two-earner families and single parents
2. Growing evidence of the benefits of early education for children living in poverty, children with disabilities, and other children at risk
3. Child advocacy, which has helped bring the needs of young children and their families to public and legislative prominence

What Is Included in Early Childhood Education?

Learning Objective 1.3. Describe the purposes and settings of early childhood programs, and categorize the age groups of children in these programs.

There is considerable diversity in the types of early childhood programs; programs vary according to the following factors:

1. Purpose of programs
2. Program settings
3. Ages of the children
4. Sources of funding support

Defining Quality in Early Childhood Programs

Learning Objective 1.4. Identify the factors that must intersect to provide and sustain a good quality early childhood program.

Program quality is one of the most important factors to consider with regard to early childhood programs. The following elements contribute to the quality of early childhood programs:

1. Child–adult ratio
2. Group size
3. Staff qualifications
4. Teachers' social and emotional support
5. Teachers' organizational and management support
6. Teachers' instructional support
7. Quality as a combination of factors

The Future of Early Childhood Education

Learning Objective 1.5. Discuss the key issues related to early childhood education that may emerge in the future.

There are a number of trends that suggest what the future holds for early childhood education. Some of the more current trends include the expectation that the needs of working families for child care will continue. In addition, early childhood programs will see growth in the number of children and families from other countries who speak languages other than English.

KEY TERMS

center-based programs
child–adult ratio
child advocacy
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)
early childhood education
extended family
family child care homes

integrated curriculum
latchkey children
nuclear family
process quality
self-care children
structural quality

KEY QUESTIONS

1. If you were given three wishes to bring about changes for young children and their families, what would they be? Share these with others in your class. From a combined list, develop several child and family issues that you think child advocates might address.
2. Visit an early childhood program in your community, and share this information with other members of your class who have visited different programs. Classify the programs according to their characteristics: for instance, purpose, setting, ages of children served, and source of support. Does your community have a variety of programs? Which types of programs predominate? What family needs are met by these programs?
3. Visit a local Head Start program. What benefits do you see for the children? Talk to a staff member, and find out what services are provided for the children and their families.
4. Suppose you were asked by the parent of a young child, "How do I find a good child care program?" What would you answer? How can you help a parent recognize quality indicators?
5. Projections for the future, as we have discussed, indicate an increased need for high-quality early childhood programs. What changes do you think are needed to bring about improvements for children and for early childhood professionals?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are select additional books and articles on topics discussed in Chapter 1.

Children's Defense Fund. *The state of America's children*. Annually published yearbooks. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from www.childrensdefense.org

Elkind, D. (1987). *Miseducation: Preschoolers at risk*. New York, NY: Knopf.

Elkind, D. (2001). *The hurried child: Growing up too fast too soon* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Perseus.

Kagan, S. L., & Cohen, N. E. (1997). *Not by chance: Creating an early care and education system for America's children*. New Haven, CT: The Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University.

PART

II

THE WHO OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood education involves different people. In Part II, we will explore the *who* of this field by examining the characteristics and needs of three groups—children, families, and teachers.

2 THE CHILDREN

NAEYC Standards Considered in Chapter 2

See the Standards Correlation Matrix in the Appendix.

- *Standard 1a:* Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth to age 8 (See Age-Related Commonalities Among Children.)
- *Standard 1c:* Recognizing that child development knowledge helps guide selection of strategies for setting positive learning environments (See Age-Related Commonalities Among Children.)
- *Standard 1b:* Understanding the impact of culture and ethnicity on development (See Factors That Influence Child Development.)
- *Standard 1b:* Knowing and understanding children's uniquenesses, particularly various abilities, and how these can affect development (See Children With Different Abilities.)
- *Standard 1c:* Establishing appropriate learning environments for all children through inclusion (See Children With Different Abilities.)
- *Standard 2b:* Supporting and engaging all families, including those of children with diverse abilities (See Working With Families of Young Children.)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 Distinguish the developmental characteristics that describe children of different ages.

2.2 Explain the factors that influence child development.

2.3 Discuss legislation that ensures the rights of young children with different abilities to participate in educational settings that are minimally restrictive as well as the characteristics of children with various abilities.

2.4 Describe what factors teachers of young children should consider in their interactions with families.

Early childhood practitioners must consider . . . what is known about child development and learning, . . . what is known about each child as an individual . . . [and] what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live. (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, pp. 9–10)

At the heart of early childhood education are young children. All the topics we will discuss in ensuing chapters are aimed at gaining a better understanding of children and how, together with their families, we can best facilitate their positive development. Although our focus will be on children, it is always important to keep in mind that they must never be seen in isolation but rather as part of a family system that provides context and identity through its lifestyle, culture, heritage, and traditions, as emphasized in the guidelines for *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In this chapter, we will take a closer look at children and consider how they should be seen as part of their community and cultural contexts, which shape much of their identity. Children have many age-related commonalities, but they also have a uniqueness, which differentiates them from everyone else.

Children who grow up in nurturing environments are generally wonderfully engaging and winning, in part because of the freshness with which they approach all experiences. Most children possess a sense of trust that the world and the people in it are friendly and kind, and they will tackle that world with joy and enthusiasm. The amount of information that children learn in the first few years of life is unparalleled in later learning. At no other time in life will there be such zest and liveliness toward acquiring skills and knowledge.

Our task in working with young children is to provide an environment in which this enthusiasm is nurtured and sustained rather than subdued or even destroyed. Unfortunately, when children are not in nurturing and stimulating environments, they could well lose that sense of freshness and that enjoyment for learning. This is why we will continue to emphasize the importance of engaging in developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Young children are eager to learn, but such eagerness can be battered down if they are frequently overwhelmed by developmentally inappropriate experiences. This is an awesome responsibility for early childhood educators, and it can be met through careful and sensitive study and understanding of the characteristics and needs of young children.

AGE-RELATED COMMONALITIES AMONG CHILDREN

Although each child is unique, children nonetheless have much in common. All children, including those with developmental challenges, share the need for nurturing and trustworthy adults, for stability and security, for increasing autonomy, and for a sense of competence and self-worth. Similarly, there are common attributes and skills that characterize children at different ages during the early years. In the course of normal development, children reach developmental milestones in a fairly predictable manner and within a reasonable time range (Marotz & Allen, 2015). Information about development is derived from a body of research that has set norms for children of different ages, which are based on the pioneering research of Arnold Gesell (1880–1961), director of the Yale Clinic of Child Development. According to Gesell, children go through a predictable sequence of development, alternating between broad stages, when they are in balance, and ones during which they are in disequilibrium (Salkind, 2004). Out of this work also came the concept of milestones, important accomplishments during children's development. Much of the information in the following brief overview of some developmental characteristics of infants and 1-, 2-, 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6- to 8-year-olds comes from Arnold Gesell's work. In fact, much of what is considered developmentally appropriate for children at specific ages—the foundation of DAP—is based on the research of Arnold Gesell.

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Children's enthusiasm and eagerness to learn must be nurtured through a supportive environment and by sensitive teachers who understand their development.

Infants

The first year of life is crucial in establishing a foundation for all areas of development. Astounding changes mark the first year; within that time, newborns, whose existence is totally dependent on adults, become mobile, communicating 12-month-olds. Professionals who care for infants need a sound understanding of the developmental changes that take place during infancy.

Newborns' earliest movements are reflexive but quickly develop into more purposeful activity. In addition, their senses operate remarkably well, providing a wealth of valuable information about this new world into which they have been thrust. By the middle of the first year, babies are reaching for and grasping objects, rolling over, and sitting up with support. During the latter half of the year, infants master the pincer grasp

(holding objects with the thumb and forefinger), crawling, pulling themselves upright, and perhaps walking alone. Through increasing skill in motor activity and use of all the senses, children learn about and make sense of the world. Socially, infants signal their recognition of significant people, especially parents and caregivers. This burgeoning affinity shifts from following these adults with their eyes to smiling and later to crawling after them. By the end of the first year, babies show strong attachments to parents and caregivers and may show considerable fear or reluctance toward strangers. Infants are amazingly adept at communicating and demonstrate increasing understanding of language. They "converse" with adults through babbling and jabbering long before they can produce recognizable words. First words also appear by the end of the first year, usually relevant to social relationships, especially "ma-ma" and "da-da" (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2018; Marotz & Allen, 2015).

Infants need responsive adults who recognize and meet their individual needs in a consistent, nurturing, respectful manner. Caregivers of infants must be extremely sensitive to the importance of establishing a stable relationship through which trust and security are generated. They provide daily routines that are tailored to each child's individual rhythm and needs for care, food, sleep, play, and social interaction. Later, when babies begin to be mobile, caregivers must provide appropriate space for crawling and beginning walking. As discussed in *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*, infants "thrive on responsive caregiving, an engaging environment, and unhurried time to experience the simple joys of being with others" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 59). There must be interesting things to explore, yet the environment must also be safe and hygienic (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

One-Year-Olds

Toddlers, as 1-year-olds are also called, have access to an expanding world of wonders to be explored. They gain increasing skills in moving through this world, starting with a lurching, wobbly gait when they first begin to walk and quickly refining their walk so that by the end of their second year their movement is quite smooth and steady and includes running, walking backward, and negotiating stairs. Soon they also begin to combine their newly developed locomotion skill with pushing and pulling objects. They are adept at picking up objects and, with great glee, also love to drop or throw them. Their increasing control over their finger muscles can be seen in their participation at meal times; they enjoy self-feeding finger foods, wielding a spoon, and drinking from a cup, though these endeavors are not always negotiated successfully. They become more independent, wanting to do many things for themselves.

Language blossoms during the second year, becoming increasingly more intelligible and varied. Vocabulary grows from a few words to an impressive mastery of up to 300 words, and single words soon become 2-word sentences. During the second half of the second year, toddlers gain the ability to internally represent objects and events. This is often seen in play, when they imitate the actions of others, engage in simple make-believe play, or dress up. Toddlers have great interest in other children, but their play is characteristically parallel rather than interactive. They focus on their own wants and needs, yet they also can show remarkable empathy toward other children. Perhaps the greatest challenge for toddlers is the need to reconcile their continuing desire for closeness to their caregivers and their growing need for independence (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2018; Honig, 1993; Marotz & Allen, 2015).

Caregivers of 1-year-olds must continue to provide a safe, consistent, sensitive, loving, and supportive environment. The interactions, conversations, and give-and-take play between caregivers and children contribute immensely to toddlers' development. Caregivers must also be constantly vigilant because toddlers are very curious about everything around them and have very little awareness of safety. DAP tells us that toddlers rely on caregivers who are loving, create an environment that is safe to explore, and provide reassurance to the children that they are safe (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The daily schedule provided for 1-year-olds is still dictated by individual rhythms and needs, but toddlers begin to exhibit greater similarity in their daily patterns; thus, caregivers may be able to schedule meals and naps for the group, while still remaining sensitive to individual differences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Satoshi-K/E+/Getty Images

Two-year-olds, in transition from babyhood to childhood, are just beginning to master many skills. They need ample opportunity to practice these in a nurturing and safe environment.

Two-Year-Olds

Some early childhood programs incorporate 2-year-olds, especially older ones, into preschool groups, whereas others place 2s into a separate toddler category. Twos are in a transitional stage, making the move from babyhood to childhood. They are in the process of acquiring and enthusiastically using many new skills, particularly the two that most visibly mark the distinction between baby and child—language and motor control.

During this year, most children increasingly gain body control—in their more self-assured walking and running that has lost its baby stagger and in their newfound finger control that allows them to put together simple puzzles or use eating utensils. At the same time, they experience tremendous language growth. Their growing vocabulary, sentence length, and grammatical forms open up all sorts of possibilities because of this increased communication competence. Self-help skills are also improving during this year, including the achievement of toilet training for the majority of children. Just as important is learning motor, language, and self-help skills is the process of gaining independence through this mastery.

Two-year-olds undertake many activities for their sheer enjoyment rather than to reach a goal. Running is pleasurable in itself rather than as a means of getting somewhere fast; painting means involvement in a sensory process rather than an interest in producing a picture. Activities are also undertaken with enormous enthusiasm. Twos wholeheartedly throw themselves into activities, whether painting, squishing play dough, pouring sand and water, or reading books. They particularly enjoy sensory experiences, using touch, taste, and smell, as well as sight and sound. Two-year-olds are notorious for their desire to repeat, using newfound skills over and over again. This desire is normal and should be encouraged, for it builds competence and allows children to fully assimilate skills before moving on to new ones.

Two-year-olds are just beginning to gain some social skills, although association with peers is more characterized by playing side by side than by interacting. They generally do not cooperate and share. In fact, young 2s, with their limited self-control, may well express their growing independence and self-assertiveness by grabbing a desired toy from a peer or by throwing a tantrum. Tantrums are not uncommon among 2s, reflecting, for instance, their limited verbal skills, which are not yet adequate to express what they want. They are also not adept at delaying gratification; they do not have the ability to wait for something they want "right now" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Marotz & Allen, 2015; Trawick-Smith, 2017).

In accordance with DAP, teachers of 2-year-olds need to provide a supportive, consistent, and safe environment in which rapidly growing skills can be practiced and mastered. Frequent and enthusiastic praise conveys that adults value the acquisition of skills. Gentle guidance acknowledges children's growing sense of self while helping them develop self-control in relation to others (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Three-Year-Olds

Three-year-olds have truly left babyhood behind, not only in appearance—with the loss of baby fat—but also in added skills. Increased balance and control are evident in large motor, fine motor, and self-help areas. Threes like to use their new skills by being helpful and wanting to please adults. Their added competence does not mean, however, that they won't occasionally have accidents or revert to earlier behaviors when upset. Overall, however, their characteristic way of responding to school experiences is with enthusiasm and enjoyment.