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THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL

A Self-Instruction Care Course®
for Early Childhood Professionals

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The Early Childhood Professional
– Online Course –

a Self-Instruction Care Course
for Early Childhood Professionals

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Credit Available for This Course

The Early Childhood Professional offers 16 clock hours (1.6 CEUs) of training. Credit for this course is available only through Care Courses.

This course can be read directly on your computer and/or printed on your printer. Read the section "How to Do This Course" on pages iii–iv of this PDF file.

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Portions of this course draw on materials developed and provided by the Wisconsin DHFS curriculum development team.

NOTE: You will need a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations to do some of the readings for this course.
You may read these on the internet or get a copy from your child care licensing office.
If you currently work in a center, a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations should be available in the center's administrative offices.
See page 5 of this course for more information.

Published by The Care Courses School, Inc., McLean, Virginia.

Introduction

Welcome to *The Early Childhood Professional*. This self-instruction course is designed for adults who teach or care for young children. This course has five lessons:

Lesson 1: **Standards for a High-Quality Child Care Environment**

This lesson examines the purpose of child care and early childhood education and the characteristics of developmentally appropriate child care.

Lesson 2: **Child Care Professionals**

This lesson discusses the meaning of professionalism in child care, identifies the characteristics necessary for child care providers, explains the duties and responsibilities of various jobs in the child care profession, and explores the ethical standards for child care professionals.

Lesson 3: **Respecting Diversity Among Children and Families**

This lesson discusses anti-bias issues related to early childhood programs. It examines ways to analyze classrooms for an anti-bias approach and ways to show respect for family differences.

Lesson 4: **Communication with Families and Staff**

This lesson discusses ways to ensure a congenial relationship with parents, how to plan and conduct parent conferences, and characteristics of successful communication with parents. The lesson also presents guidelines for harmonious staff relationships and a five-step problem-solving process.

Lesson 5: **Stress Management Strategies**

This lesson identifies sources, signs, and effects of stress, examines ways to reduce stress in child care settings, and presents ways to improve your own stress management skills and help children develop their own coping skills.

The Care Courses School Honor Code and Policy

All work must be done by the student whose name is on the account where the enrollment code was activated.

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How to Do This Course

This self-instruction course is designed for independent study.

In addition to this course file, you will need a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations to do some of the readings for this course. You may read these regulations on the internet (see page 5 of this course for instructions) or get a copy of your state's regulations from your local child care licensing office.

Advantages of a self-instruction course

- You don't have to leave your home to attend classes.
- You can work on the course whenever *you* choose, not just when a class happens to meet.
- You can work as fast or as slowly as *you* want to.
- You can spend as much time on every lesson as *you* need to.

This course can be read directly on your computer and/or printed on your printer.

This course has several features to help you be your own teacher.

Learning Objectives

Each lesson begins with **Learning Objectives.** Read these before you read the lesson. They will help you focus on the important points of the lesson.

Self Checks

Each lesson has True/False **Self Check** questions with answers provided. Answer these questions, and check your answers. Re-read any sections of the lesson that gave you trouble.

Lesson Quizzes

Each lesson ends with a **Lesson Quiz**. Please read each lesson two times before attempting its quiz. Once you have finished reading each lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at

www.CareCourses.com and open your course to access the Online Quiz for the lesson.

You must make a score of at least 70% on each Quiz in order to receive credit for this course. If your score is less than 70% on any quiz, you will be given a second chance to re-read the material and redo the questions. Failing the second time will result in no certificate. Please read the course content carefully before attempting the quizzes. We want you to get the best possible grade you can!

The lessons are not designed to be hard. The questions are not designed to be tricky. Read all of each lesson and think about what it says. If you have trouble, please contact us. We're always happy to help!

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Happy Studying!

Lesson 1

Standards for a High-Quality Child Care Environment

NOTE: You will need a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations to do some of the readings for this course. You may read these on the internet or get a copy from your child care licensing office. If you currently work in a center, a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations should be available in the center's administrative offices. See page 5 of this lesson for more information.

Learning Objectives

In Lesson 1 you will learn

- the purpose of early education
- the purpose of child care
- your state's rules and regulations that govern family and group child care
- characteristics of various types of child care
- what is meant by "developmentally appropriate practice" in child care
- the components of a developmentally appropriate child care setting for group and family care
- space requirements for child care
- ratios and group sizes for center and family child care
- rules and regulations for multi-age groups in family day care
- program requirements for child care
- rules for equipment for child care settings

Child care affects the way children think, learn, and behave and can have a long-term impact on the child's life.

A variety of child care settings exist today—public and private day care centers, group care in the home of another family, a hired caregiver in the child's own home, day camps, residential care centers for children and youth, and shelter care facilities. Each type of child care setting can offer excellent care and experiences for children. However, each type of child care setting can also offer poor, unsafe, and detrimental care. This lesson looks at the essential ingredients in a high-quality child care program.

The Purpose of Early Education

Children's early education should provide them opportunities to

- develop competence in all aspects of the self;
- learn to live with others;
- express their feelings;
- enjoy new experiences.

In other words, we can say that the purpose of early education is ***to foster competence in dealing with life***.

What is Competence?

Competence is the feeling of "I can do it," "I am able," and "I know how to." The feeling of competence is needed before we are able to take risks or try new things.

The ***success*** of early education can be measured in the degree to which the child

- displays competence in all aspects of the self;
- interacts with others in a positive way;
- can express his or her own feelings in constructive, appropriate ways;
- seeks and welcomes new experiences.

The Purpose of Child Care

The purpose of child care is to assist children's parents in

- keeping their child safe, healthy, and happy;
- meeting their child's needs for love and affection;
- providing opportunities for children to develop competence in dealing with life.

How can I foster competence in children?

Following are several things that teachers can do to foster competence in children:

1. Understand the general capabilities and interests of each age group.
   - Activities for children should not be too easy or too difficult.
2. Have a knowledge of each individual child in care.
   - Knowing some things about the child's family life, such as the birth order of the child, what behavior do the parent(s) expect, neighborhood, child's friends, is the family experiencing a crisis, etc. will help you know each child.
3. Know how young children think.
   - Children pass through a series of stages.
   - Children learn things one step at a time.
   - Children learn best by doing.
   - Children use play to translate experience into understanding.

The effective teacher will teach skills gradually—beginning first with simple skills, then moving on to more complex skills.

4. Realize that parents are the most important influence in the development of the child.
   - In most cases, children spend more time with their parents than with any other adults.
   - Children's strongest emotional bonds are with their parents.
5. Present learning within a climate of caring.
6. Plan curriculum activities that foster competence in all of the "selves":

   Physical
   Emotional
   Social
   Creative
   Cognitive

* * *

Common Myths About Child Care

The Children's Defense Fund has identified a number of common myths about child care which we will now examine. Following each myth is a discussion of the true situation in the United States today provided by the Children's Defense Fund.

MYTH: There is no child care problem.

REALITY: Talk to any working parent and you will hear about their concerns with child care. Parents are worried about the care their children get. In a *Parents* Magazine survey, more than half of parents who responded admitted that they worry every week about whether their child is getting what they need in child care, and 50-60% reported having had a very bad experience with child care. Parents also talk about not being able to find quality child care that they can afford. Study after study has shown that families with children are struggling to pay for care, that the quality of care is too often mediocre to poor, and that many parents, particularly those with infants or school age children, those working odd hours and those living in low-income communities, are unable to find the care they need. This is a problem for all of us. The lack of quality child care that is affordable to working parents prevents children from entering school ready to learn. It hinders their success in school and limits the ability of their parents to be productive workers. And the lack of quality after- school options leaves our children vulnerable to violence, crime, and substance abuse.

MYTH: All parents are satisfied with their children's care.

REALITY: Ask American parents about child care and they will tell you they wish they could do better for their children but cannot because the costs are too high, the quality they are looking for does not exist, or the demands of their work schedules limit their choices. In national, state, and local polls, as well as in more in-depth interviews, parents express deep concerns about the quality of their children's care and a strong desire for better alternatives. For example, in a poll by *Parents* Magazine, more than half of the parents who responded admitted that they worry every week whether their child is getting enough one-on- one attention, eating well, learning, and adjusting to the care environment. One of four say their child's care is not as good as they would like it to be. Sixty percent of those who use out-of-home care, and 50% of those who have an in-home provider, have had such bad experiences that they will not use that arrangement any longer.

MYTH: The quality of child care doesn't have much impact on a child's development.

REALITY: Tell that one to any parent! Parents know that the person that cares for their child 40 or so hours a week makes a difference in their child's life and well-being. Both common sense and research tell us that children's brains are growing most quickly during their first three years of life and that their experiences during these critical early years lay the foundation for the rest of their lives. So it is obvious that child care affects the way that children think, learn, and behave and can have a long-term impact. Given all of this, it is not surprising that studies repeatedly have shown that *good* quality child care—care that provides a loving, safe, and stable environment—helps children enter school ready to succeed, improve their skills, and stay safe while their parents work. The positive impact of good care is even greater for low-income children. And studies have shown that *poor* quality care, which is too often unstimulating, uncaring, and even unsafe, deprives children of the strong start they need.

MYTH: Most parents can use free care provided by relatives or friends, or, alternatively, many parents do not have to pay for care, so they do not need any help.

REALITY: While care provided by relatives can be a good option in many cases—an option that about a quarter of American families use—such care is not always available, not free, or not necessarily the family's preferred option. While many families use free care when it is available, many working families end up paying for child care each year. It is important that we help *all* families make the choices they want by helping them afford their first choice of care, whether it be a relative, neighbor, neighborhood child care home, or child care center.

MYTH: Lack of child care is not a barrier to work.

REALITY: Parents cannot go to work each day unless they have safe, reliable care for their children. Studies have repeatedly shown that child care problems can cause parents to miss work or lose their jobs and that the lack of child care is a primary barrier preventing welfare recipients from getting and keeping jobs. As such, child care assistance is key to any effort to move families from welfare to work and to help low-income parents stay employed.

MYTH: Parents can always find enough child care.

REALITY: In study after study, parents and experts report that *good* child care is in short supply and is particularly scarce for parents who have infants or school age children, who work during nontraditional hours, or who live in low-income communities.

MYTH: Providing child care assistance to low-income families has "in-

terfered" with the market, leading to shortages of infant care.

REALITY: It is ludicrous to think that helping low-income families pay for the child care of their choice—including relatives, neighbors, family child care homes, or child care centers—"interferes" with the market. Helping families with some of their child care expenses expands the options available to parents by helping them afford the care they want for their children. Without such assistance, low income parents are limited to the inadequate choices they can afford on their own incomes (which often means leaving their children in poor quality and, too often, unsafe care) or are forced to go on welfare because they cannot afford to work and pay for child care. Working parents with infants face a particularly daunting challenge. Infant care is more costly, as babies need more intensive attention from adults. This means that a single adult can care for fewer infants than for older children which, in turn, increases staffing costs. Many programs are less willing to serve babies for this reason, and usually charge more for this age group. Consequently, infant care is more scarce, more costly, and of poorer quality than for older preschoolers. Helping parents of very young children access the quality and type of care they prefer, whether it be a relative, neighbor, family child care home, or center, is essential, both for the parent's peace of mind and ability to work and for the child's development and safety during these critical early learning years.

MYTH: Some states are doing enough to address families' child care needs.

REALITY: While some states are investing resources to help improve the quality and lower the cost of child care, many states are not doing enough and, too often, working families are left without choices and without quality child care. For example, some states provide assistance only to the poorest families, leaving low-income working families struggling to afford the high cost of child care. In many states, low-income working families are eligible to receive assistance but do not get it because of insufficient resources. The states are not going to solve this problem alone any more than the federal government can solve it alone. It's going to take all of us, working together in our families, our businesses, our neighborhoods, our houses of worship, and with our elected officials.

MYTH: Unregulated care is not harmful.

REALITY: Parents consistently report that they want basic consumer protection in place to keep their children safe when they are in child care centers and family child care homes. In one survey, about 90% of parents said they supported regulation of the child care industry. It is common sense that basic health and safety protections, such as criminal background checks for providers, and periodic monitoring for safety hazards such as uncovered electric outlets or unsecured poisonous substances, can protect children from harm.

Much attention was focused on two-year-old Jessica McClure of Texas who once fell down an open well. What many do not realize is that Jessica was being cared for in an unregulated family child care home. Regulations can help prevent such near-tragedies.

MYTH: Welfare reform will not increase the demand for child care.

REALITY: Parents required to seek employment under welfare reform will need safe, reliable care for their children while they are at work. While some parents may want to use friends or relatives to provide care, many low-income parents do not have such options available, or want other arrangements for their children. Studies across the country have shown that without child care, families will be unable to make the transition from welfare to work.

MYTH: Child care advocates want big government solutions, such as government-run centers.

REALITY: It's a mistake to think the government runs or controls child care centers or advocates are proposing that it do so. Our child care system is a patchwork of private enterprises, which like many other private businesses, flourish or fail based on the demands of the free market. Right now, parents choose among relatives, neighbors, child car centers, and neighborhood child care homes. We don't want to change that system; we want it to work better. We believe that parents have a primary responsibility to their children, that parents should have the resources to choose the type and quality of care they think is best for their child, and caregivers should have the support and the resources they need to provide quality child care. The bottom line is that parents need more choices, greater flexibility, and real security in choosing reliable child care. This is not about creating government-run centers or creating new federal programs. It is about helping working families and their children find affordable quality child care so parents can stay on the job while keeping their children safe and nurtured.

MYTH: Big businesses can pay for child care.

REALITY: While a number of businesses have implemented creative approaches to help their employees find and pay for child care, much more should be done. At this point, only a fraction of businesses address child care problems and business expenditures account for only a small percentage (1%) of total child care spending. However, businesses cannot be expected to offer all the solutions—the private sector is not going to be able to solve this problem alone any more than the federal government can solve it alone. It is going to take all of us, working together in our families, our businesses, our neighborhoods, our houses of worship, and with our elected officials.

MYTH: Children are better off if their mothers stay home.

REALITY: There is no question that we need to support *all* parents in their child care choices. Helping parents who need to find good child care so they can work, and helping parents who stay at home are complementary—not competing—efforts. But too many working parents do not have a choice. More parents work than ever before and many families rely on the mother's

income to make ends meet. Half of America's families with young children earn less than $35,000 per year. And many women, particularly in low- and moderate-income families, are essential in helping support their families financially. A national study found that 55% of working women provide half or more of the household income. And one of three children of working mothers are either poor even though their mothers work or *would* be if their mothers did not work.

Source: Children's Defense Fund, January 26, 1998

* * *

Self Check 1.1 True/False

___ 1. Children's early education should provide them opportunities to learn to live with others.

___ 2. The purpose of early education is to foster competence in dealing with life.

___ 3. One measure of the success of early education is the degree to which the child welcomes new experiences.

___ 4. Young children need opportunities to learn to express their own feelings.

___ 5. The only purpose of child day care is to watch children when their parents are unable to do so.

___ 6. In order to foster competence in young children, the caregiver or teacher must understand the capabilities and interests of individual children as well as the general capabilities and interests of each age group.

___ 7. Children learn best from their own first-hand experiences.

___ 8. When teaching skills to young children, it is best to begin with complex skills rather than simple skills.

___ 9. Children's strongest emotional bonds are with their parents.

___10. Surveys show that in the United States today, most parents are well pleased with their child's day care.

___11. The quality of a child's care has little if any impact on the child's development.

___12. Children's brains grow the most quickly during their first three years of life.

___13. Care that provides a loving, safe, stable environment helps children enter school ready to succeed.

___14. Lack of child care prevents many parents from getting or keeping a job.

___15. Infant care costs less than care for preschoolers.

___16. Most states have programs that provide all the assistance working families need to pay for child care.

___17. Most parents feel that child day care should not be regulated.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. F, 6. T, 7. T, 8. F, 9. T, 10. F, 11. F, 12. T, 13. T, 14. T, 15. F, 16. F, 17. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16 and 17 of Self Check 1.1 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

5. The purpose of child care is to assist children's parents in keeping their child safe, healthy, and happy; meeting their child's needs for love and affection; and providing opportunities for children to develop competence in dealing with life.

8. Effective teachers teach skills gradually—beginning first with simple skills, and then moving on to more complex skills.

10. More than half of parents who responded to surveys admitted that they worry every week about whether their child is getting what they need in child care.

11. Studies repeatedly show that good quality child care—care that provides a loving, safe, and stable environment—helps children enter school ready to succeed.

15. Infant care is more costly than care for preschoolers because babies need more intensive attention from adults.

16. Some states provide assistance only to the poorest families, leaving low-income working families struggling to afford the high cost of child care. In many states, low-income working families are eligible to receive assistance but do not get it because of insufficient resources.

17. Surveys have found that most parents support regulation of the child care industry. Parents want basic consumer protection and guidelines that protect their children from harm.

* * *

Rules and Regulations for Child Care

In order to help ensure that child care facilities

- meet certain safety standards;
- protect children's health and well-being;
- provide appropriate care and guidance;
- provide for children's developmental needs; and
- offer children appropriate learning opportunities.

every state has rules and regulations that govern child care within that state. Some states refer to their rules and regulations as Minimum Standards.

***You will need a copy of your state's Licensing and Regulations for Child Care* in order to complete this course.** You will be asked to look up various topics in your state's regulations as you do the lessons in this course.

You may get copies of your state's Licensing and Regulations for Child Care from your local office of child care licensing or you may read your state's regulations online. If you currently work in a center, a copy of your state's child care licensing regulations should be available in the center's administrative offices. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care maintains a website that posts

child care licensing and regulations for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands at: *http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm*. Click on the "State Licensing and Regulation Information" section. Then click on the name of your state. In addition to the text of each state's licensing and regulations, this website lists the name, address, and phone number of the state's licensing agency.

Most states have a separate set of rules and regulations for each type of child care facility (such as Family Day Homes, Group Homes, Child Care Centers). *You will need a copy of each set of rules and regulations that your state has for this course.*

In some states, child care licensing is a division of the Department of Human Services, Department of Human Resources, Department of Social Services, Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, or perhaps the Department of Health. In other states, child care facilities are regulated by the state's Office of Child Care Services, Office of Children and Family Services, or Office of Youth and Family Services.

You should become very familiar with your state's rules and regulations before you become a child care provider.

State regulations cover the following topics:

- procedures for applying for and renewing a license
- building and equipment
- fire protection
- safety
- transportation of children
- space requirements
- staff qualifications
- training for staff
- staff responsibilities
- group size and ratios of staff to children
- program requirements
- supervision of children
- discipline and guidance
- health and infection control
- nutrition
- child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment
- facility management and administration

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to locate each of the topics listed above. You may wish to highlight these headings so you can find them easily when the topics are discussed in more detail later in this course.

All child care providers must know and follow their state's rules and regulations governing child care.

Types of Child Care

Care Outside the Child's Home

The term *day care*, or *child day care*, refers to a setting that provides daily care outside the child's residence on a regular basis for children during the hours of a full working day.

Child care is a broad term that is used to describe many kinds of care provided for young children by someone other than parents, guardian, or relatives. The terms *day care* and *child care* are typically used interchangeably, although child care can also refer to care provided within the child's own home.

The terms *Licensed Child Care* and *Licensed Day Care* refer to care outside the child's residence that has been licensed by a state agency to meet minimum standards of safety and staffing. These standards are established by the agency authorized by the state to govern child care. As we noted earlier in this lesson, the name of the agency varies from one state to another.

Licensed child care facilities must be inspected by the relevant state agency and fulfill the rules, requirements, and regulations set by the state. If a facility fails to comply with state regulations, licensing officials have the authority to close that facility.

Provider refers to an adult in a child day care facility who provides care and supervision of the children.

Although the number and definition of categories of child day care facilities varies somewhat from state to state, most states divide child care facilities into three major categories:

Family Day Care, also referred to as a ***Family Day Care Home*** or simply a ***Day Home***, refers to a residence in which child day care is provided on a regular basis for more than three hours per day per child for compensation. The number and ages of children that may be cared for by one provider in a family day care home is regulated by the state and is typically limited to six or perhaps eight children.

Most states require Family Day Care Homes to be licensed by the state. In some states, Family Day Care Homes are *registered* rather than licensed. Registration is a form of self-regulation.

Group Family Day Care Home (or ***Group Home***) refers to a residence in which child day care is provided on a regular basis for more than three hours per day per child for a larger number of children than may be cared for in a Family Day Care Home. The staff of a Group Family Day Care Home includes at least two adults. The typical number of children permitted in a Group Family Day Care Home is between seven and 12.

Day Care Center or ***Child Care Center*** refers to a facility that is not a residence in which child day care is provided on a regular basis for more than three hours per day per child, usually for a larger number of children than may be cared for in a Family Day Care Home.

A ***Nursery School*** typically provides a half-day program for children two to five years of age. Children usually attend two or three days per week. A major purpose of nursery schools is socialization and enrichment activities.

Preschool refers to a structured learning program for children younger than kindergarten. Licensed child care centers, group homes, as well as many

family day care programs offer preschool as part of the day.

Assignment

Read through your state's rules and regulations for child care to find out what the different types of child care facilities are called in your state.

* * *

Care in the Child's Home

Some parents choose to employ caregivers to care for their children in their own home. Following are four categories of in-home child care providers:

Baby-sitter — Provides supervisory custodial care for children on an irregular, part-time basis. Baby-sitters are not required to have any special training or background.

Au-pair — Lives with a family as part of the family. For a small salary, the au-pair provides help with light housework and child care typically for up to 45 hours per week. The au-pair usually works under the direction and supervision of the parent. Quite often, au-pairs are foreign nationals in the United States for up to one year to learn English and for cultural purposes.

Mother's Helper — Lives in or out and works for a family to provide full-time child care and other domestic help for families in which one parent is at home most of the time. A mother's helper usually works under the direction and supervision of the at-home parent but may be left in complete charge for brief periods.

Nanny — A person who has received special training and preparation in caring for young children. A nanny may live in or out and is responsible for the complete care of the children left in her charge. Nannies' duties are generally restricted to child care and the domestic duties related th child care. Training for nannies includes courses in child development, the physical care of children, developmental activities, communications, first aid, care of the sick child, as well as personal enrichment courses such as etiquette and contracts and professionalism. The nanny's work week is usually 50 to 60 hours.

* * *

In the following article which is based on an address given at a conference of the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children in Bellevue, Washington, Lilian Katz looks at quality in early childhood programs from two vantage points: that of the adult and that of the child. Examine your own program from both of these points of view. Make notes about what you discover and steps you might take to improve the quality of your program.

* * *

Looking at the Quality of Early Childhood Programs

by Lilian G. Katz, PhD

There are many ways to assess the quality of a program for young children. One is to look at it from the top down; another is from the bottom up. Both views are important.

A Top-Down View of the Quality of a Program

When we enter an early childhood setting as adults and attempt to assess its quality, we look at such characteristics as:

- The quality and quantity of space per child;
- The quality and type of equipment and materials;
- The adult/child ratio;
- The number of toilets, fire safety provisions, etc.

In addition, we should also consider the quality of teacher-parent relations and ask such questions as: Are they usually respectful? Supportive? Open? Inclusive? Tolerant?

These positive attributes are relatively easy when teacher and parents like each other; come from the same background; share culture, values, language, and goals for children. Almost anyone can do that. But to build such positive respectful and supportive relations with parents who are different from us in these ways requires professionalism, which requires training and experience.

To be professional means to respond gracefully rather than defensively in moments of disagreement. It means also to develop relationships not on the basis of personal preferences and impulses, but on the basis of professional knowledge and judgment, and to make them problem-centered, rather than personal.

Furthermore, the top-down view should include an examination of staff relationships. We could ask:

- Are they supportive rather than contentious?
- Are they cooperative rather than competitive?
- Are they accepting rather than antagonistic or even hostile?
- Are they trusting rather than suspicious?
- Are they respectful rather than bossy?

Dissension among the staff of the program can drain energy away from the main focus on children, their families, and their needs. Again, to relate well to colleagues we like - with whom we agree - who share the same goals, background, culture, language, and values is relatively easy. But to be respectful of those with whom we disagree or from whom we are different requires professionalism, and that usually requires knowledge, judgment, and training.

A Bottom-Up View of the Quality of a Program

The characteristics of a program that really predict its outcome are the answers to the bottom-up question, which is: What does it feel like to be a child in this environment?

Obtaining answers to this question is not easy! It requires making the very best guess one can about how each individual child in this group experiences the program. We can proceed by asking

about the environment on behalf of each child:

- Is it welcoming rather than merely captivating?
- Do I belong in the group rather than merely have a good time?
- Am I usually accepted by adults rather than scolded?
- Am I taken seriously rather than just precious or cute?
- Am I usually accepted by some peers rather than isolated, neglected, or rejected?
- Is this environment usually involving rather than entertaining?
- Are the activities meaningful rather than mindless?
- Are the activities engaging rather than amusing?
- Are the activities interesting rather than boring?
- Do I usually come here willingly rather than reluctantly?

It seems to me that only when answers to most of these questions are positive can we assume that the quality of the program is worthy of our children.

Observation and High-Quality Early Care and Education

Observation, and observation notes, are an essential part of any high-quality early childhood program. In the following article, "Growing a Culture of Inquiry: Observation as Professional Development," Ann Pelo explores the viewpoint that early childhood programs are incubators of inquiry for children, families, and teachers. Creating a cycle of observation, study, and planning allowed Pelo and her colleagues to make their observation and thinking visible.

Don't let the fear of "getting it right" prevent you from keeping observation notes. Observation notes are dynamic and not always perfectly prepared. However, the more you do it, the more comfortable you'll be with the process.

* * *

Growing a Culture of Inquiry: Observation as Professional Development

by Ann Pelo

Early childhood programs ought to be incubators of inquiry. Children, teachers, families, and program administrators, collectively and individually engaged in systematic investigation, searching and researching, asking questions, mulling over hypotheses, debating, trying on new perspectives: this is the culture of inquiry in which we all deserve to participate.

To grow a culture of inquiry, we need professional development rooted in inquiry, aimed at fostering the values and growing the dispositions and skills of researchers: curiosity; willingness to linger with questions; commitment to constructing knowledge with others through dialogue, disagreement, and challenge; and, attentive observation. When we put inquiry at the heart of our programs, we organize our curriculum for children and for teachers around observation, study, and responsive planning.

In a curriculum built around inquiry, teachers pay close attention to children's play and work, taking notes and photographs, capturing what they see and hear — researchers collecting data. Teachers study their notes and photos and other traces of children's work to unearth the meaning in the children's play—researchers making meaning of their observations: *What theories are the children exploring through their play? What questions are they asking? What relationships are they building?* From their observation and study, teachers plan ways for the children to test their theories, expand their questions, and strengthen their relationships—researchers taking action. And, then, teachers observe and listen some more, as the children engage with the materials and activities that teachers offer as a result of their planning; they make notes about their observations and start another round of study and planning. Throughout this cycle of observation, study, and planning, teachers make their observation and thinking visible to the children, to families, and to each other with written documentation and display. This process becomes a spiral that carries teachers, children, and families more and more deeply into investigation, collaboration, and relationship. Like life, it unfolds moment by moment, one step at a time, with surprises and detours and new questions to take up. And, like life, it is anchored in everyday, ordinary moments in our classrooms.

At Hilltop Children's Center, the full-day, year-round child care program where I am the mentor teacher, we've experimented with several professional development practices centered on observation, as we've aimed to grow the dispositions and skills needed for this cycle of inquiry: center-wide research questions, supported observation and meaning-making, and collaborative study of observations.

Center-wide research questions

Inspired by the study questions used by the staff at Chicago Commons, we develop a research question each year to give us a shared focus for observation and study.

Our research question is linked to our year-long professional development focus. Several years ago, for example, our year-long focus centered on the intersections between anti-bias curriculum and the Reggio-inspired practice of pedagogical documentation. During our monthly staff meetings, quarterly in-service days, and our annual staff retreat, we explored this intersection from a range of perspectives, with the intention of strengthening our anti-bias work with children, families, and each other. Our research question at the beginning of that year was: "How do children explore and express their cultural identities in their drama play?" Later in the year, we added a second question: "When do children call attention to difference and when do they ignore it? How do they use difference in their relationships with each other?"

We establish our research question in September; I bring some big ideas that I think hold potential for our shared study, and, as a full staff, we tease out a specific question for our research. Our research question launches us into a cycle of observation and study.

Teachers bring their research question observations to our monthly meetings of the full staff, where we study them together. During these full-staff meetings, teachers from different classroom teaching teams work together; as they share their observations, they bump into new and unexpected ways of thinking about children's learning—and even unexpected ways of thinking about the research question itself. Our work with the research question during staff meetings invites teachers to try on new perspectives, to see the delicate dance between "just-the-facts" observation and the subtle interpretation that shapes observation notes.

During our staff meeting work with the research question, we typically plan some collective next steps that we'll take to grow curriculum—steps we'll take in light of our research observations to make more room for children's cultural expressions, for example, or to support children's ability to engage with differences. This planning inevitably carries us to conversations about our shared values and goals for children, and about our collective teaching practices—conversations which deepen our sense of purpose and vision as a program.

Our research question not only gives us a way to practice the cycle of observation, study, and planning; it also leads us to specific new understandings about children's learning and development. Through our research question observations over the last few years, we've deepened our knowledge of children's drama play, of the way they use blocks, of their social strategies for inclusion and exclusion. Through our observation and study, we join in dialogue with educational theorists like Piaget, Dewey, and Paley.

Supported observation and meaning-making in the classroom

The research question provides a shared framework for observation that lets us practice the cycle of observation, meaning-making, and planning as a whole staff. The parallel practices of supported observation and meaning-making with individual teachers and with classroom teaching teams grounds teachers' inquiry in their particular contexts.

When I'm in a classroom, as mentor teacher, I partner with a teacher to observe children's play and listen to their conversations. We tuck ourselves into a non-intrusive space where we can take notes and photos about what we're seeing and hearing. We talk quietly together about the play we see, sharing our questions and musings as we seek to understand what's important about the play for the children. We consider what we might offer the children right there and then to deepen their exploration and to sustain their play. Our intention is to see into these ordinary moments, to use close observation as a doorway into understanding and, then, into offering children challenge and support.

As teachers become more and more at ease with this process, they dive into observation themselves, not waiting for me to partner with them, but gathering stories themselves. When teachers meet in the hallway or in the office, they are eager to share their observations with each other: they talk with engaged curiosity about what they've seen and heard, discuss possible interpretations of the children's play, and share thoughts about next steps they might take. The air is full of questions, insights, hypotheses; breathing it in is breathing in inquiry.

Collaborative study of observations

To solidify our practice of inquiry, we've established the expectation that every teacher brings written observation notes and/or photos to their classroom teaching team's hour-long weekly meeting. Teachers pull out carefully typed sheets, or bits of scrap paper—even crumpled paper napkins used to record a breakfast table conversation that captured a teacher's attention. We dive into the stories together, working with questions like these to help us make meaning of our observations:

- What are we curious about as we listened to this story of children play?
- What are the children curious about? What are they trying to figure out?
- What knowledge are the children drawing on? What theories are they testing?
- How are the children building on each other's ideas, perspectives, and contributions?
- Are there any inconsistencies in the children's thinking?
- What do we want to learn more about?
- What goals and values come up for us in this situation?

Once we have a sense of what the children's play is "about," we consider how we might extend or challenge children's thinking. We plan one or two next steps, concrete action that we'll take with the children to help them deepen their exploration, nudge them to take new perspectives, and encourage them to reconsider their theories. Our intention is to generate a cycle of inquiry for the children—to create more questions

and deeper study, not to give children information or lead them to "right answers" or help them acquire facts. In our planning, we consider questions like:

- What changes could we make to the classroom environment to invite children to look at their pursuit from a new perspective?
- What materials could we add to the classroom?
- How could we participate in the children's play?
- How could we invite the children to use expressive and representational media to deepen or extend their thinking?
- How could we use our notes and photos sketches to help the children revisit and extend their play?
- How will we be in dialogue with families, inviting their reflections and insights as well as letting them know what we're thinking and wondering?

As we end a meeting, teachers have a plan about what they'll do next to extend and deepen children's investigations. A week later, they arrive at the team's next meeting with more observations to share about how children engaged with the next steps that teachers offered—and we move through the cycle of meaning-making and planning again.

With each round of the cycle, teachers become more skillful as researchers; they notice gaps in their observation notes and work to correct those gaps next time; they become more astute at looking underneath the topical concerns of children's play, digging out the deeper meanings and questions that children's play holds; they experiment with strategies and practices to deepen children's thinking, growing a repertoire of possibilities; they engage in passionate discussion with each other, relaxing into the challenge of deep collaboration as they take up meaningful research with each other. This cycle of observation, meaning-making, and planning weaves our professional development into the fabric of daily teaching.

At the same time, with each round of the cycle, in-depth, long-term investigations grow. This emergent curriculum, anchored by observation and study, stays closely linked to children's questions and pursuits, because it unfolds one step at a time. Teachers carefully observe what happens with each step, constantly adjusting and refining their planning in response to what they observe. In this way, children and teachers construct curriculum together.

Observation as a strategy for transformation

When we put observation at the heart of our professional development at Hilltop, everything changed. Teachers who'd typically sat back, arms crossed, unengaged during staff meetings and classroom team meetings now lean into our discussions: they have observation stories to share, insights to offer, questions to ask. Classroom team meetings, once a tedious listing of housekeeping and logistical details, have become animated discussions about teaching and learning; teachers are quick to work through the dry and mundane details of classroom life so that they can dive into the stimulating and sustaining work of teacher research. Talk of our core values and our vision for our work is a regular part of our staff meetings, as we seek to locate our observations and planning in our school's larger purpose. Our curriculum involves everyone—children, teachers, families—in long-term investigations, as the cycle of inquiry for teachers launches cycles of inquiry for children and families.

This transformation required strong institutional support; we created my half-time mentor teacher position to organize and facilitate our professional development. And it required willingness by teachers to take risks, to see their work in new ways—to become researchers, observing closely, making meaning with each other, anchoring themselves in the revelations of each moment. A year into our effort to put observation at the heart of our teaching and learning, one of the teachers at Hilltop commented that "This is making me a better teacher, for sure—but more than that, it's making me a better person. This is how I want to live in the world—paying attention, staying connected to what I see, thinking about big ideas with other people."

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

High-quality child care follows *developmentally appropriate* practices, that is, practices that are appropriate to each child's developmental level. A developmentally appropriate early childhood program is based on three guiding principles:

1. Activities are planned based on a knowledge of how young children develop and learn.
2. Children are seen and planned for as individuals, not simply as a group of toddlers or a group of preschoolers.

A child's developmental level is not the same thing as the child's age level. While all children follow the same *pattern* of development, each individual child proceeds at his or her own individual pace.

3. Children are treated with respect, understanding, and a sensitivity to their changing capacities.

A developmentally appropriate early childhood program provides opportunities for children to

- explore, manipulate, and make an impact on their environment;
- expand and extend their knowledge of their environment;
- construct their own knowledge and understanding through their own play experiences;
- develop impulse control;
- cope with and respond to conflict;
- develop positive self-images and feelings of competence;

- develop mutually supporting patterns of interaction.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood education focuses on the daily enhancement of children's joyful experiences of spontaneous play and experimentation.

* * *

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which is the nation's largest professional organization of early childhood educators, published its first position statements on developmentally appropriate practice in 1986 and 1987 and issued updates in 1996 and 2009. The original documents were developed in response to specific, identified needs:

1. To provide guidance to program personnel seeking accreditation by NAEYC's National Academy of Early Childhood Programs;

2. To respond to a growing trend toward more formal, academic instruction of young children.

In the late 1980s, many early childhood programs were placing undue emphasis on rote learning and whole-group instruction of narrowly defined academic skills at the expense of more active learning approaches based on a broader interpretation of children's educational needs and abilities. During this same period, increasing numbers of infants and toddlers were being cared for in group-care settings where expectations and practices more appropriate for older children were too often imposed on them.

NAEYC's primary position is that programs designed *for* young children should be based on what is known *about* young children. The guidelines also reflect a clear commitment regarding the rights of young children to respectful and supportive learning environments and to an education that will prepare them for participation in a free and democratic society. Children's experiences during early childhood not only influence their later functioning in school but can have effects throughout life.

NAEYC's leadership role in defining guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice has proven extremely beneficial to our nation's young children as well as young children in other countries. NAEYC's revised position statement, which follows, was adopted in 2009.

* * *

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

Adopted 2009

A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children

The purpose of this position statement 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. Since its first adoption in 1986, this framework has been known as developmentally appropriate practice.

The profession's responsibility to promote quality in the care and education of young children compels us to revisit regularly the validity and currency of our core knowledge and positions, such as this one on issues of practice. Does the position need modification in light of a changed context? Is there new knowledge to inform the statement? Are there aspects of the existing statement that have given rise to misunderstandings and misconceptions that need correcting?

Over the several years spent in developing this revision, NAEYC invited the comment of early childhood educators with experience and expertise from infancy to the primary grades, including a late 2006 convening of respected leaders in the field. The result of this broad gathering of views is this updated position statement, which addresses the current context and the relevant knowledge base for developmentally appropriate practice and seeks to convey the nature of such practice clearly and usefully.

This statement is intended to complement NAEYC's other position statements on practice, which include *Early Learning Standards and Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation*, as well as the *Code of Ethical Conduct* and *NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria*.

Note: Throughout this statement, the terms teacher, practitioner, and educator are variously used to refer to those working in the early childhood field. The word *teacher* is always intended to refer to any adult responsible for the direct care and education of a group of children in any early childhood setting. Included are not only classroom teachers but also infant/toddler caregivers, family child care providers, and specialists in other disciplines who fulfill the role of teacher. In more instances, the term practitioners is intended to also include a program's administrators. *Educators* is intended to also include college and university faculty and other teacher trainers.

Critical issues in the current context

Since the 1996 version of this position statement, the landscape of early childhood education in the United States has changed significantly and a number of issues have grown in importance. Shortage of good care for children in the highly vulnerable infant and toddler years has become critical. Issues of home language and culture, second language learning, and school culture have increased with the steady growth in the number of immigrant families and children in our population. In addition, far more children with special needs (including those with disabilities, those at risk for disabilities, and those with challenging behaviors) participate in typical early childhood settings today than in the past. As for teachers, the nation continues to struggle to develop and maintain a qualified teaching force.

This difficulty is especially acute in the underfunded early childhood arena, especially the child care sector, which is losing well prepared teaching staff and administrators at an alarming rate.

Looking forward, demographic trends predict a modest growth in the number of young children in the population, significant increases in the demand for early care and education, dramatic increases in children's cultural and linguistic diversity, and unless conditions change, a greater share of children living in poverty. Among these, the biggest single child-specific demographic change in the United States over the next 20 years is predicted to be an increase in children whose home language is not English.

Also significant is that policy makers and the public are far more aware of the importance of the early childhood years in shaping children's futures. Based on this widespread recognition and the context of early childhood education today, it was decided this statement would highlight three challenges: reducing learning gaps and increasing the achievement of all children; creating improved, better connected education for preschool and elementary children; and recognizing teacher knowledge and decision making as vital to educational effectiveness.

Reducing learning gaps and increasing the achievement of all children

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

Behind these disparities in school-related performance lie dramatic differences in children's early experiences and access to good programs and schools. Often there is also a mismatch between the "school" culture and children's cultural backgrounds. A prime difference in children's early experience is in their exposure to language, which is fundamental in literacy development and indeed in all areas of thinking and learning. On average, children growing up in low-income families have dramatically less rich experience with language in their homes than do middle-class children: They hear far fewer words and are engaged in fewer extended conversations. By 36 months of age, substantial socioeconomic disparities already exist in vocabulary knowledge, to name one area.

Children from families living in poverty or in households in which parent education is low typically enter school with lower levels of foundational skills, such as those in language, reading, and mathematics. On starting kindergarten, children in the lowest socioeconomic group have average cognitive scores that are 60 percent below those of the most affluent group. Explained largely by socioeconomic differences among ethnic groups, average math achievement is 21 percent lower for African American children than for white children and 19 percent lower for Hispanic children than for non-Hispanic white children. Moreover, due to deep-seated equity issues present in communities and schools, such early achievement gaps tend to increase rather than diminish over time.

Creating improved, better connected education for preschool and elementary children

For many years, preschool education and elementary education—each with its own funding sources, infrastructure, values, and traditions—have remained largely separate. In fact, the education establishment typically has not thought of preschool as a full-fledged part of American public education. Among the chief reasons for this view is that preschool is neither universally funded by the public nor mandatory. Moreover, preschool programs exist within a patchwork quilt of sponsorship and delivery systems and widely varying teacher credentials. Many programs came into being primarily to offer child care for parents who worked. In recent years, however, preschool's educational purpose and potential have been increasingly recognized, and this recognition contributes to the blurring of the preschool-elementary boundary. The two spheres now have substantial reasons to strive for greater continuity and collaboration.

One impetus is that mandated accountability requirements, particularly third grade testing, exert pressures on schools and teachers at K–2, who in turn look to teachers of younger children to help prepare students to demonstrate the required proficiencies later. A related factor is the growth of state-funded prekindergarten, located in schools or other community settings, which collectively serves more than a million 3- and 4-year-olds. Millions more children are in Head Start programs and child care programs that meet state prekindergarten requirements and receive state preK dollars. Head Start, serving more than 900,000 children nationwide, is now required to coordinate with the public schools at the state level. Title I dollars support preschool education and services for some 300,000 children. Nationally, about 35 percent of all 4-year-olds are in publicly supported prekindergarten programs.

For its part, the world of early care and education stands to gain in some respects from a closer relationship with the K–12 system. Given the shortage of affordable, high-quality programs for children under 5 and the low compensation for those staff, advocates see potential benefits to having more 4-year-olds, and perhaps even 3-year-olds, receive services in publicly funded schooling. Proponents also hope that a closer relationship between early-years education and the elementary grades would lead to enhanced alignment and each sphere's learning from the other, thus resulting in greater continuity and coherence across the preK–3 span.

At the same time, however, preschool educators have some fears about the prospect of the K–12 system absorbing or radically reshaping education for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, especially at a time

when pressures in public schooling are intense and often run counter to the needs of young children. Many early childhood educators are already quite concerned about the current climate of increased high-stakes testing adversely affecting children in grades K–3, and they fear extension of these effects to even younger children. Even learning standards, though generally supported in principle in the early childhood world, are sometimes questioned in practice because they can have negative effects.

Early learning standards are still relatively new, having been mandated by Good Start, Grow Smart in 2002 for the domains of language, literacy, and mathematics. While some states have taken a fairly comprehensive approach across the domains of learning and development, others focus heavily on the mandated areas, particularly literacy. When state standards are not comprehensive, the curriculum driven by those standards is less likely to be so, and any alignment will likely address only those few curriculum areas identified in the standards.

Such narrowing of curriculum scope is one shortcoming that can characterize a set of standards; there can be other deficiencies, too. To be most beneficial for children, standards need to be not only comprehensive but also address what is important for children to know and be able to do; be aligned across developmental stages and age/grade levels; and be consistent with how children develop and learn. Unfortunately, many state standards focus on superficial learning objectives, at times underestimating young children's competence and at other times requiring understandings and tasks that young children cannot really grasp until they are older. There is also growing concern that most assessments of children's knowledge are exclusively in English, thereby missing important knowledge a child may have but cannot express in English.

Alignment is desirable, indeed critical, for standards to be effective. Yet effective alignment consists of more than simplifying for a younger age group the standards appropriate for older children. Rather than relying on such downward mapping, developers of early learning standards should base them on what we know from research and practice about children from a variety of backgrounds at a given stage/age and about the processes, sequences, variations, and long-term consequences of early learning and development.

As for state-to-state alignment, the current situation is chaotic. Although discussion about establishing some kind of national standards framework is gaining momentum, there is no common set of standards at present. Consequently, publishers competing in the marketplace try to develop curriculum and textbooks that address the standards of all the states. Then teachers feel compelled to cover this large array of topics, teaching each only briefly and often superficially. When such curriculum and materials are in use, children move through the grades encountering a given topic in grade after grade—but only shallowly each time—rather than getting depth and focus on a smaller number of key learning goals and being able to master these before moving on.

Standards overload is overwhelming to teachers and children alike and can lead to potentially problematic teaching practices. At the preschool and K–3 levels particularly, practices of concern include excessive lecturing to the whole group, fragmented teaching of discrete objectives, and insistence that teachers follow rigid, tightly paced schedules. There is also concern that schools are curtailing valuable experiences such as problem solving, rich play, collaboration with peers, opportunities for emotional and social development, outdoor/physical activity, and the arts. In the high-pressure classroom, children are less likely to develop a love of learning and a sense of their own competence and ability to make choices, and they miss much of the joy and expansive learning of childhood.

Educators across the whole preschool-primary spectrum have perspectives and strengths to bring to a closer collaboration and ongoing dialogue. The point of bringing the two worlds together is not for children to learn primary grade skills at an earlier age; it is for their teachers to take the first steps together to ensure that young children develop and learn, to be able to acquire such skills and understandings as they progress in school.

The growing knowledge base can shed light on what an exchanging of best practices might look like, as noted later in " Applying New Knowledge to Critical Issues." Through increased communication and collaboration, both worlds can learn much that can contribute to improving the educational experiences of all young children and to making those experiences more coherent.

Recognizing teacher knowledge and decision making as vital to educational effectiveness

The standards/accountability movement has led to states and other stakeholders spelling out what children should know and be able to do at various grade levels. Swift improvement in student achievement across all student subgroups has been demanded. Under that mandate, many policy makers and administrators understandably gravitate toward tools and strategies intended to expedite the education enterprise, including "teacher proofing" curriculum, lessons, and schedules. As a result, in some states and districts, teachers in publicly funded early childhood settings report that they are allowed far less scope in classroom decision making than they were in the past, in some cases getting little to no say in the selection of curriculum and assessments or even in their use of classroom time.

How much directing and scaffolding of teachers' work is helpful, and how much teacher autonomy is necessary to provide the best teaching and learning for children? The answer undoubtedly varies with differences among administrators and teachers themselves and the contexts in which they work.

A great many school administrators (elementary principals, superintendents, district staff) lack a background in early childhood education, and their limited knowledge of young children's devel-

opment and learning means they are not always aware of what is and is not good practice with children at that age. Teachers who have studied how young children learn and develop and effective ways of teaching them are more likely to have this specialized knowledge. Moreover, it is the teacher who is in the classroom every day with children. So it is the teacher (not administrators or curriculum specialists) who is in the best position to know the particular children in that classroom—their interests and experiences, what they excel in and what they struggle with, what they are eager and ready to learn. Without this particular knowledge, determining what is best for those children's learning, as a group and individually, is impossible.

But it must be said that many teachers themselves lack the current knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care and education to young children, at least in some components of the curriculum. Many factors contribute, including the lack of a standard entry-level credential, wide variation in program settings and auspices, low compensation, and high turnover. With workforce parameters such as these, is it reasonable to expect that every teacher in a classroom today is capable of fully meeting the challenges of providing high-quality early care and education?

Expert decision making lies at the heart of effective teaching. The acts of teaching and learning are too complex and individual to prescribe a teacher's every move in advance. Children benefit most from teachers who have the skills, knowledge, and judgment to make good decisions and are given the opportunity to use them.

Recognizing that effective teachers are good decision makers, however, does not mean that they should be expected to make all decisions in isolation. Teachers are not well served when they are stranded without the resources, tools, and supports necessary to make sound instructional decisions, and of course children's learning suffers as well.

Ideally, well conceived standards or learning goals (as described previously) are in place to guide local schools and programs in choosing or developing comprehensive, appropriate curriculum. The curriculum framework is a starting place, then teachers can use their expertise to make adaptations as needed to optimize the fit with the children. Further, such curricular guidance gives teachers some direction in providing the materials, learning experiences, and teaching strategies that promote learning goals most effectively, allowing them to focus on instructional decision making without having to generate the entire curriculum themselves.

Even well qualified teachers find it challenging to create from scratch a comprehensive curriculum that addresses all the required standards and important learning goals, as well as designing the assessment methods and learning experiences. This daunting task is even less realistic for those teachers with minimal preparation. Hence, there is value in providing teachers a validated curriculum framework and related professional development, as long as teachers have the opportunity to make individual adaptations for the diversity of children they teach.

That good teaching requires expert decision making means that teachers need solid professional preparation, as well as ongoing professional development and regular opportunities to work collaboratively. Since this level of preparation and training does not yet exist for many in the early childhood workforce, the question of how best to equip and support inadequately prepared teachers needs serious investigation. Research on critical factors in good teaching, as described in the next section of this statement, has powerful lessons to offer.

* * *

Self Check 1.2. True/False

___ 1. Each state has its own rules and regulations governing child care.

___ 2. Family Day Care refers to care provided on a regular basis in the child's own home.

___ 3. Developmentally appropriate practices are practices that are appropriate to each individual child's developmental level.

___ 4. A developmentally appropriate early childhood program provides opportunities for children to construct their own knowledge through play experiences.

___ 5. NAEYC is the largest professional organization of early childhood educators in the U. S.

___ 6. At the time that the NAEYC published its first position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education, almost all early childhood facilities had developmentally appropriate programs.

___ 7. Educational practices are most effective when attuned to the way children develop and learn.

___ 8. A child's early experiences affect the child throughout the child's life.

___ 9. Exposure to language during early childhood has a major effect on literacy development and all areas of thinking and development.

___10. Preschool has traditionally been thought of as a full-fledged part of American public education.

___11. To be the most beneficial to young children, learning standards must address what is important for young children to know and be able to do.

___12. Learning standards for young children should be consistent with how children develop and learn.

___13. Problem solving, working with other children, and physical activity are important elements of young children's early education.

___14. High-pressure early childhood classrooms increase children's love of learning and sense of their own ability to make choices.

___15. Standards-based accountability tends to increase teachers' power and opportunities to make decisions about curriculum and assessment methods.

___16. Children benefit most from teachers who have skills, knowledge, and judgment to make good decisions and are given the opoortunity to use them.

(1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. F, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. F, 11. T, 12. T, 13. T, 14. F, 15. F, 16. T)

* * *

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 2, 6, 10, 14 and 15 of Self Check 1.2 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

2. Family Day Care refers to a residence in which child day care is provided on a regular basis for more than three hours per day per child for compensation.

6. NAEYC published its first position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in 1986 because many early childhood programs were placing undue emphasis on rote learning and whole-group instruction at the expense of more active learning approaches based on children's educational needs and abilities.

10. The education establishment typically has not thought of preschool as a full-fledged part of American public education because it is neither universally funded by the public nor mandatory.

14. In a high-pressure classroom, children are less likely to develop a love of learning and a sense of their own competence and ability to make choices.

15. Teachers in some states and districts report that they are allowed far less scope in classroom decision making than they were in the past as a direct result of the standards/accountability movement.

Applying new knowledge to critical issues

Fortunately, a continually expanding early childhood knowledge base enables the field to refine, redirect, or confirm understandings of best practice. The whole of the present position statement reflects fresh evidence of recent years and the perspectives and priorities emerging from these findings. This section looks within that mass of new knowledge to a few lines of research specifically helpful in addressing the three critical issues for the field identified in this position statement.

First, new findings hold promise for reducing learning gaps and barriers and increasing the achievement of all children. More is now known about which early social and emotional, cognitive, physical, and academic competencies enable young children to develop and learn to their full potential. Such findings are useful in determining curriculum content and sequences for all children. But they are especially important in helping those children most likely to begin school with lower levels of the foundational skills needed to succeed and most likely to fall farther behind with time—among whom children of color, children growing up in poverty, and English language learners are over-represented. Another key aspect is ensuring that children who have learning difficulties or disabilities receive the early intervention services they need to learn and function well in the classroom.

Research continues to confirm the greater efficacy of early action—and in some cases, intensive intervention—as compared with remediation and other "too little" or "too late" approaches. Changing young children's experiences can substantially affect their development and learning, especially when intervention starts early in life and is not an isolated action but a broad-gauged set of strategies. For example, Early Head Start, a comprehensive two-generational program for children under age 3 and their families, has been shown to promote cognitive, language, and social and emotional development. The success of Early Head Start illustrates that high-quality services for infants and toddlers—far too rare in the United States today—have a long-lasting and positive impact on children's development, learning abilities, and capacity to regulate their emotions.

Although high-quality preschool programs benefit children (particularly low-income children) more than mediocre or poor programs do, fewer children living in poverty get to attend high-quality preschool programs than do children from higher-income households. Findings on the impact of teaching quality in the early grades show a similar pattern. In addition to this relationship of overall program and school quality to later school success, research has identified a number of specific predictors of later achievement. Some of these predictors lie in language/literacy and mathematics; others are dimensions of social and emotional competence and cognitive functioning related to how children fare in school.

In the language and literacy domain, vocabulary knowledge and other aspects of oral language are particularly important predictors of children's reading comprehension. Even when children with limited vocabulary manage to acquire basic decoding skills, they still often encounter difficulty around grade 3 or 4 when they begin needing to read more advanced text in various subjects. Their vocabulary deficit impedes comprehension and thus their acquisition of knowledge necessary to succeed across the curriculum. Clearly, children who hear little or no English in the home would have even more initial difficulty with comprehension in English.

To shrink the achievement gap, then, early childhood programs need to start early with proactive vocabulary development to bring young children whose vocabulary and oral language development is lagging—whatever the causes—closer to the developmental trajectory typical of children from educated, affluent families. For these children to gain the vocabulary and the advanced linguistic structures they will need for elementary grade reading, their teachers need to engage them in language interactions throughout the

day, including reading to them in small groups and talking with them about the stories. Especially rich in linguistic payoff is extended discourse; that is, conversation between child and adult on a given topic sustained over many exchanges.

Compelling evidence has shown that young children's alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness are significant predictors of their later proficiency in reading and writing. A decade ago, many preschool teachers did not perceive it as their role—or even see it as appropriate—to launch young children on early steps toward literacy, including familiarizing them with the world of print and the sounds of language. The early childhood profession now recognizes that gaining literacy foundations is an important facet of children's experience before kindergarten, although the early literacy component still needs substantial improvement in many classrooms.

Like the teaching of early literacy, mathematics education in the early childhood years is key to increasing all children's school readiness and to closing the achievement gap. Within the mathematics arena, preschoolers' knowledge of numbers and their sequence, for example, strongly predicts not only math learning but also literacy skills. Yet mathematics typically gets very little attention before kindergarten. One reason is that early childhood teachers themselves often lack the skills and confidence to substantially and effectively increase their attention to mathematics in the curriculum.

Mathematics and literacy concepts and skills—and, indeed, robust content across the curriculum—can be taught to young children in ways that are engaging and developmentally appropriate. It can be, but too often isn't; to achieve such improvements will require considerable strengthening of early-years curriculum and teaching. Failing to meet this challenge to improve all children's readiness and achievement will perpetuate the inequities of achievement gaps and the low performance of the U.S. student population as a whole.

Besides specific predictors in areas such as mathematics and literacy, another major thread in recent research is that children's social and emotional competencies, as well as some capabilities that cut across social and emotional and cognitive functioning, predict their classroom functioning. Of course, children's social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment is important in its own right, both in and out of the classroom. But it now appears that some variables in these domains also relate to and predict school success. For example, studies have linked emotional competence to both enhanced cognitive performance and academic achievement. A number of factors in the emotional and social domain, such as independence, responsibility, self-regulation, and cooperation, predict how well children make the transition to school and how they fare in the early grades.

A particularly powerful variable is self-regulation, which the early childhood field has long emphasized as a prime developmental goal for the early years. Mounting research evidence confirms this importance, indicating that self-regulation in young children predicts their later functioning in areas such as problem solving, planning, focused attention, and metacognition, and thus contributes to their success as learners. Moreover, helping children from difficult life circumstances to develop strong self-regulation has proven to be both feasible and influential in preparing them to succeed in school.

The gains children make as a result of high-quality programs for children under 6 have been found to diminish in a few years if children do not continue to experience high-quality education in grades K–3. This consistent finding makes clear the importance of improving quality and continuity all along the birth–3 continuum. As previously described, critical to developing a better connected, more coherent preschool-elementary framework is aligning standards, curriculum, and assessment practices within that continuum. (Ideally, such a framework would extend to infant and toddler care as well.)

Further, educators and researchers are beginning to consider how to unite the most important and effective elements of preschool education with those of K–3. In this search for the "best of both worlds," policy makers and educators can look to the expanding body of knowledge on the aspects of early learning and development that enable children to do well in school and the practices that should be more prevalent across the entire preK–3 span.

First, research evidence on the predictors of successful outcomes for children (highlighted earlier) suggests a number of learning goals and experiences that in some form ought to be incorporated across preK–3. These include, for example, robust curriculum content; careful attention to known learning sequences (in literacy, mathematics, science, physical education, and other domains); and emphasis on developing children's self-regulation, engagement, and focused attention. Also proven to yield positive results for children are practices familiar to early childhood educators, such as relationship-based teaching and learning; partnering with families; adapting teaching for children from different backgrounds and for individual children; active, meaningful, and connected learning; and smaller class sizes. Evidence of the benefits of these practices suggests that they should be extended more widely into the elementary grades.

A second source of knowledge about effectively connecting education across the preschool-grade 3 span comes from educational innovations now being piloted. Schools that encompass these grades and thoughtfully consider how to increase continuity, alignment, and coherence are emerging around the country, and some are being studied by researchers.

Expansion of P–16 or P–20 commissions around the country, although not yet giving much attention to prekindergarten, provides one vehicle for the conversations about continuity that need to take place. While there are entrenched practices and structures separating preschool and K–3 education, the current forces noted here provide considerable impetus and opportunity to achieve stronger, more coordinated preK–3 education.

The importance of teachers to high-quality early education, indeed to all of education, cannot be overemphasized. Although wise administrative and curricular decisions made upstream from the individual teacher significantly affect what goes on in the classroom, they are far from ensuring children's learning. Research indicates that the most powerful influences on whether and what children learn occur in the teacher's interactions with them, in the real-time decisions the teacher makes throughout the day. Thus, no educational strategy that fails to recognize the centrality of the teacher's decisions and actions can be successful.

It is the teacher's classroom plans and organization, sensitivity and responsiveness to all the children, and moment-to-moment interactions with them that have the greatest impact on children's development and learning. The way teachers design learning experiences, how they engage children and respond to them, how they adapt their teaching and interactions to children's background, the feedback they give—these matter greatly in children's learning. And none can be fully determined in advance and laid out in a curriculum product or set of lesson plans that every teacher is to follow without deviation. Teachers will always have moment-to-moment decisions to make.

To make these decisions with well-grounded intentionality, teachers need to have knowledge about child development and learning in general, about the individual children in their classrooms, and about the sequences in which a domain's specific concepts and skills are learned. Teachers also need to have at the ready a well developed repertoire of teaching strategies to employ for different purposes.

Directly following from this first lesson is a second: the imperative to make developing teacher quality and effectiveness a top priority. This investment must include excellent preservice preparation, ongoing professional development, and on-the-ground support and mentoring. For example, good curriculum resources are helpful when they specify the key skills and concepts for children and provide a degree of teaching guidance, but without overscripting. New or inadequately trained teachers and those encountering a new curriculum or set of standards may be particularly in need of such scaffolding.

Another valuable form of scaffolding for teachers is interaction with mentors and peers. Meeting the needs of diverse learners and helping all children to develop and learn require significant time for teachers to collaborate with colleagues, discuss and observe best practices, and participate in meaningful professional development. Most teachers, including novice teachers, get too little time for such activities. While providing time and opportunity for teachers to do these things can be very challenging for administrators, it is critical.

To act on this second "lesson"—the imperative to make teaching quality and effectiveness a top priority—means changing what happens in the classroom. But it also means establishing policies and committing public funds at the federal, state, and local levels, as described in "Policy Considerations," the concluding section of this position statement.

Core considerations in developmentally appropriate practice

Every day, early childhood practitioners make a great many decisions, both long-term and short-term. As they do so, they need to keep in mind the identified goals for children's learning and development and be intentional in helping children achieve these goals. The core of developmentally appropriate practice lies in this intentionality, in the knowledge that practitioners consider when they are making decisions, and in their always aiming for goals that are both challenging and achievable for children.

Knowledge to consider in making decisions

In all aspects of their work with children, early childhood practitioners must consider these three areas of knowledge:

1. **What is known about child development and learning—referring to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children's learning and development.**

Teachers who are knowledgeable about child development and learning are able to make broad predictions about what children of a particular age group typically will be like, what they typically will and will not be capable of, and what strategies and approaches will most likely promote their optimal learning and development. With this knowledge, teachers can make preliminary decisions with some confidence about environment, materials, interactions, and activities. At the same time, their knowledge also tells them that specific groups of children and the individual children in any group always will be the same in some ways but different in others.

2. **What is known about each child as an individual—referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.**

To be effective, teachers must get to know each child in the group well. They do this using a variety of methods—such as observation, clinical interview (an extended dialogue in which the adult seeks to discern the child's concepts or strategies), examination of children's work, individual child assessments, and talking with families. From the information and insights gathered, teachers make plans and adjustments to promote each child's individual development and learning as fully as possible. Developmental variation among children is the norm, and any one child's progress also will vary across domains and disciplines, contexts, and time. Children differ in many other respects, too—including in their strengths, interests, and preferences; personalities and approaches to learning; and knowledge, skills, and abilities based on prior experiences. Children may also have special learning needs;

sometimes these have been diagnosed and sometimes they have not. Among the factors that teachers need to consider as they seek to optimize a child's school adjustment and learning are circumstances such as living in poverty or homelessness, having to move frequently, and other challenging situations. Responding to each child as an individual is fundamental to developmentally appropriate practice.

3. What is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live—referring to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children's lives at home and in their communities that practitioners must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family.

As we grow up in a family and in a broader social and cultural community, we all come to certain understandings about what our group considers appropriate, values, expects, admires. We learn this through direct teaching from our parents and other important people in our lives and through observing those around us. Among these understandings, we absorb "rules" about behaviors—such as how to show respect, how to interact with people we know well and those we have just met, how to regard time and personal space, how to dress, and countless other attitudes and actions. We typically absorb these rules very early and very deeply, so we live by them with little conscious thought. When young children are in a group setting outside the home, what makes sense to them, how they use language to interact, and how they experience this new world depend on the social and cultural contexts to which they are accustomed. A skilled teacher takes such contextual factors into account, along with the children's ages and their individual differences, in shaping all aspects of the learning environment.

To recap this decision-making process: An effective teacher begins by thinking about what children of the age and developmental status represented in the group are typically like. This knowledge provides a general idea of the activities, routines, interactions, and curriculum that will be effective with that group. The teacher also must consider each child, including looking at the child as an individual and within the context of family, community, culture, linguistic norms, social group, past experience (including learning and behavior), and current circumstances. Only then can the teacher see children *as they are* to make decisions that are developmentally appropriate for each of them.

Challenging *and* achievable goals

Meeting children where they are is essential, but no good teacher simply leaves them there. Keeping in mind desired goals and what is known about the children as a group and individually, the teacher plans experiences to promote children's learning and development.

Learning and development are most likely to occur when new experiences build on what a child already knows and is able to do and when those learning experiences also entail the child stretching a reasonable amount in acquiring new skills, abilities, or knowledge. After the child reaches that new level of mastery in skill or understanding, the teacher reflects on what goals should come next; and the cycle continues, advancing children's learning in a developmentally appropriate way.

Clearly, such effective teaching does not happen by chance. A hallmark of developmentally appropriate teaching is intentionality. Good teachers are intentional in everything they do—setting up the classroom, planning curriculum, making use of various teaching strategies, assessing children, interacting with them, and working with their families. Intentional teachers are purposeful and thoughtful about the actions they take, and they direct their teaching toward the goals the program is trying to help children reach.

* * *

Self Check 1.3. True/False

___ 1. High-quality services for infants and toddlers have a positive and long-lasting impact on children's development, learning abilities, and capacity to regulate their own emotions.

___ 2. Limited vocabulary knowledge makes it difficult for children to understand the content of materials they read in school.

___ 3. Extended conversations between children and adults on a given topic help children expand their vocabulary knowledge.

___ 4. Preschoolers' knowledge of numbers and their sequence predicts their later success in both math learning and literacy skills.

___ 5. Mathematics and literacy concepts cannot be taught to young children in ways that are developmentally appropriate.

___ 6. Children's social and emotional competencies predict their school success.

___ 7. Most children maintain the positive effects of high-quality early childhood programs throughout elementary school and beyond regardless of the quality of the K–3 programs they attend.

___ 8. Teachers' interactions with children have a more powerful influence on whether and what children learn than any other factor.

___ 9. It is best for children's development that all teachers follow a standard set of lesson plans and teaching strategies.

___10. A love for children is the only qualification necessary for teacher effectiveness.

___11. The goals for a developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children should be challenging but achievable.

___12. Teachers should base their expectations and predictions about children's capabilities on a thorough knowledge of child development and learning.

___13. Knowledge of each child as an individual is essential in order to promote each child's individual development and learning as fully as possible.

___14. In shaping an effective learning environment, teachers must consider the social and cultural contexts of children's homes and communities.

___15. Learning and development are most likely to occur when new experiences build on what a child already knows and is able to do.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. F, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. F, 10. F, 11. T, 12. T, 13. T, 14. T, 15. T)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 5, 7, 9 and 10 of Self Check 1.3 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

5. Mathematics and literacy concepts and skills—and, indeed, robust content across the curriculum—can be taught to young children in ways that are engaging and developmentally appropriate by strengthening the early-years curriculum and teaching.

7. The gains children make as a result of high-quality programs for children under 6 have been found to diminish in a few years if children do not continue to experience high-quality education in grades K-3.

9. The greatest impact on children's development and learning comes from the teacher's classroom plans and organization, sensitivity and responsiveness to all the children, and moment-to-moment interactions with them.

10. Effective teachers are intentional in everything they do, including their love of children. Intentional teachers are purposeful and thoughtful about the actions they take, and they direct their teaching toward helping children reach their goals.

* * *

The next section of the NAEYC position statement discusses principles of child development and learning upon which developmentally appropriate practices are based.

Principles of child development and learning that inform practice

Developmentally appropriate practice as defined in this position statement is not based on what we think might be true or what we want to believe about young children. Developmentally appropriate practice is informed by what we know from theory and literature about how children develop and learn. In particular, a review of that literature yields a number of well supported generalizations, or principles.

No linear listing of principles—including the one below—can do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon that is child development and learning. While the list is comprehensive, it certainly is not all-inclusive. Each principle describes an individually contributing factor; but just as all domains of development and learning are interrelated, so too do the principles interconnect. For example, the influence of cultural differences and individual differences, each highlighted in a separate principle below, cuts across all the other principles. That is, the implication of any principle often differs as a function of cultural or individual givens.

A complete discussion of the knowledge base that informs developmentally appropriate practice is clearly beyond the scope of this document. Each of the principles rests on a very extensive research base that is only partially referenced here.

All the limitations of such a list not withstanding, collectively the principles that follow form a solid basis for decision making—for decisions at all levels about how best to meet the needs of young children in general, and for decisions by teachers, programs, and families about the strengths and needs of individual children, with all their variations in prior experiences, abilities and talents, home language and English proficiency, personalities and temperaments, and community and cultural backgrounds.

1. All the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, and cognitive—are important, and they are closely interrelated. Children's development and learning in one domain influence and are influenced by what takes place in other domains.

Children are thinking, moving, feeling, and interacting human beings. To teach them well involves considering and fostering their development and learning in all domains. Because this full spectrum of development and learning is fundamental to children's lives and to their future participation as members of society, early care and education must address all the domains.

Further, changes in one domain often facilitate or limit development in other areas. For example, when children begin to crawl or walk, they gain new possibilities for exploring the world, and their mobility affects both their cognitive development and sense of autonomy. Likewise, children's language development influences their ability to participate in social interaction with adults and other children; such interactions, in turn, support their further language development. A growing body of work demonstrates the relationship between emotional and social factors and children's academic competence and thus the importance of all these areas in educating young children. In brief, the knowledge base documents the importance of a comprehensive curriculum and the interrelatedness of the developmental domains in children's well-being and success.

2. Many aspects of children's learning and development follow well documented sequences, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired.

Human development research suggests that relatively stable, predictable sequences of growth and change occur in children during the first nine years of

life. Predictable changes occur in all domains of development, although the ways that these changes are manifested and the meaning attached to them may vary widely in different cultural and linguistic contexts. Knowledge of how children within a given age span typically develop and learn provides a general framework to guide teachers in preparing the learning environment, considering curriculum, designing learning experiences, and teaching and interacting with children.

Also important for educators to know are the sequences in which children gain specific concepts, skills, and abilities, building on prior development and learning. In mathematics, for example, children's learning to count serves as an important foundation for their acquiring an understanding of numerals. Familiarity with known learning sequences should inform curriculum development and teaching practice.

3. Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child as well as unevenly within different areas of each child's functioning.

Individual variation has at least two dimensions: the inevitable variability around the typical or normative course of development and the uniqueness of each child as an individual. Children's development follows individual patterns and timing; children also vary in temperament, personality, and aptitudes, as well as in what they learn in their family and within the social and cultural context or contexts that shape their experience.

All children have their own strengths, needs, and interests. Given the enormous variation among children of the same chronological age, a child's age is only a crude index of developmental abilities and interests. For children who have special learning needs or abilities, additional efforts and resources may be necessary to optimize their development and learning. The same is true when children's prior experiences do not give them the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in a specific learning environment.

Given this normal range of variation, decisions about curriculum, teaching, and interactions with children should be as individualized as possible. Rigid expectations of group norms do not reflect what is known about real differences in development and learning. At the same time, having high expectations for all children is essential, as is using the strategies and providing the resources necessary to help them meet these expectations.

4. Development and learning result from a dynamic and continuous interaction of biological maturation and experience.

Development is the result of the interplay between the growing, changing child and the child's experiences in the social and physical worlds. For example, a child's genetic makeup may predict healthy growth, but inadequate nutrition in the early years of life will keep this potential from being fulfilled. Conversely, the impact of an organic condition on a young child's learning and development can be minimized through systematic, individualized intervention. Likewise, a child's innate temperament—such as a predisposition to be either wary or outgoing—shapes and is shaped by how other children and adults interact with that child. In light of the power of biology and the effects of children's prior experiences, it is important for early childhood educators to maintain high expectations and employ all their knowledge, ingenuity, and persistence to find ways to help every child succeed.

5. Early experiences have profound effects, both cumulative and delayed, on a child's development and learning; and optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning to occur.

Children's early experiences, whether positive or negative, are cumulative. For example, a child's social experiences with other children in the preschool years may help him develop social skills and confidence that enable him or her to make friends in subsequent years, and these experiences further enhance the child's social competence and academic achievement. Conversely, children who fail to develop minimal social skills and thus suffer neglect or rejection from peers are at risk for later outcomes such as school dropout, delinquency, and mental health problems. Similarly, early stimulation promotes brain development and the forming of neural connections, which in turn enable further development and learning. But if the very young child does not get this stimulation, he is less able to benefit from subsequent learning opportunities, and a cumulative disadvantage is set in motion.

Intervention and support are more successful the earlier a problem is addressed. Prevention of reading difficulties, for example, is far less difficult and expensive than remediation. In addition, the literature shows that some aspects of development occur most efficiently at certain points in the life span. The first three years of life, for example, appear to be an optimal period for oral language development. Ensuring that children get the needed environmental inputs and supports for a particular kind of learning and development at its "prime time" is always the most reliable route to desired results.

6. Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities.

A pervasive characteristic of development is that children's functioning becomes increasingly complex—in language, social interaction, physical movement, problem solving, and virtually every other domain. Increased organization and memory capacity of the developing brain make it possible with age for children to combine simple routines into more complex strategies. The younger the child, the more she or he tends to think concretely and in the here and now. Yet in some ways, young children's thinking can be quite abstract. For example, preschoolers know that adding always makes more and subtracting makes less, and they are able to grasp abstract ideas about counting objects such as the one-to-one principle.

All young humans must negotiate the transition from total dependence on

others at birth to competence and internal control, including learning to regulate their emotions, behaviors, and attention. For young infants, there are tasks such as learning to soothe themselves from arousal to a settled state. A few years later, self-regulation means developing the capacity to manage strong emotions and keep one's attention focused. Throughout the early years, adults play significant roles in helping children learn to self-regulate.

Caregivers are important in helping very young children to modulate their emotional arousal; for example, soothing babies and then helping them learn to soothe themselves. In the preschool years, teachers can help children develop self-regulation by scaffolding high-level dramatic play, helping children learn to express their emotions, and engaging children in planning and decision making.

During the early years of life, children move from sensory or behavioral responses to symbolic or representational knowledge. For example, young children are able to navigate their homes and other familiar settings by recall and sensory cues, but later they come to understand and can use abstractions such as left and right or read a map of the house. It is around age 2 that children begin to represent and reconstruct their experiences and knowledge. For example, children may use one object to stand for another in play, such as a block for a phone or a spatula for a guitar. Their ability to use various modes and media to convey their meaning increases in range and scope. By the preschool years, these modes may include oral language, gestures and body movement, visual arts (drawing, painting, sculpting), construction, dramatic play, and writing. Their efforts to represent their ideas and concepts in any of these modes enhance the knowledge itself.

7. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.

From the earliest years of life, warm, nurturing relationships with responsive adults are necessary for many key areas of children's development, including empathy and cooperation, self-regulation and cultural socialization, language and communication, peer relationships, and identity formation.

When children and caring adults have the opportunity to get to know each other well, they learn to predict each other's signals and behavior and establish attunement and trust. The first and most important relationships are those a child forms with parents or other primary caregivers. Forming one or more such attachments sets the stage for other relationships, as children move into the wider world beyond their immediate family. Young children benefit from opportunities to develop ongoing, trusting relationships with adults outside the family and with other children. Notably, positive teacher-child relationships promote children's learning and achievement, as well as social competence and emotional development.

Nurturing relationships are vital in fostering high self-esteem and a strong sense of self-efficacy, capacity in resolving interpersonal conflicts cooperatively, and the sociability to connect with others and form friendships. Further, by providing positive models and the security and confidence to try new experiences and attempt new skills, such relationships support children's learning and the acquisition of numerous capabilities.

8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

Understanding children's development requires viewing each child within the sociocultural context of that child's family, educational setting, and community, as well as within the broader society. These various contexts are interrelated, and all powerfully influence the developing child. For example, even a child in a loving, supportive family within a strong, healthy community is affected by the biases of the larger society, such as racism or sexism, and may show some effects of its negative stereotyping and discrimination.

Here *culture* is intended to refer to the customary beliefs and patterns of behavior, both explicit and implicit, that are inculcated by the society—or by a social, religious, or ethnic group within the society—in its members. Even though culture is discussed often in the context of diversity and immigrant or minority groups, all of us are members of cultures and are powerfully influenced by them. Every culture structures and interprets children's behavior and development in its own way. Early childhood teachers need to understand the influence of sociocultural contexts and family circumstances on learning, recognize children's developing competencies, and be familiar with the variety of ways that children may demonstrate their developmental achievements. Most importantly, educators need to be sensitive to how their own cultural experience shapes their perspective and to realize that multiple perspectives, not just their own, must be considered in decisions about children's development and learning.

As children grow up, they need to learn to function well in the society and in the increasingly global economy and to move comfortably among groups of people from backgrounds both similar and dissimilar to their own. Fortunately, children are capable of learning to function in more than one social or cultural context and to make behavioral or linguistic shifts as they move from one context to another, although this complex ability does not occur overnight and requires adult support. Acquiring a new language or the ability to operate in a new culture can and should be an additive process, rather than causing the displacement of the child's first language and culture. For example, immigrant children are able to develop English proficiency without having to give up their home language, and it is important that they retain their fluency in the language of their family and community. Likewise, children who speak only English benefit from learning another language and can do so without sacrificing their English proficiency.

9. Always mentally active in seeking to understand the world around them, children learn in a variety of ways; a wide range of teaching strategies and interactions are effective in supporting all these kinds of learning.

Several prominent theories and bodies of research view cognitive development from the constructivist, interactive perspective. That is, young children construct their knowledge and understanding of the world in the course of their own experiences, as well as from teachers, family members, peers and older children, and from books and other media. They learn from the concrete (e.g., manipulatives); they also apparently are capable of and interested in abstract ideas, to a far greater degree than was previously believed. Children take all this input and work out their own understandings and hypotheses about the world. They try these out through interactions with adults and other children, physical manipulation, play, and their own thought processes—observing what happens, reflecting on their findings, imagining possibilities, asking questions, and formulating answers. When children make knowledge their own in these ways, their understanding is deeper and they can better transfer and apply their learning in new contexts.

Using multiple teaching strategies is important in meeting children's different learning needs. The *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers* report concluded:

> *Good teachers acknowledge and encourage children's efforts, model and demonstrate, create challenges and support children in extending their capabilities, and provide specific directions or instruction. All of these teaching strategies can be used in the context of play and structured activities. Effective teachers also organize the classroom environment and plan ways to pursue educational goals for each child as opportunities arise in child-initiated activities and in activities planned and initiated by the teacher.*

Thus, children benefit when teachers have at their disposal a wide range of teaching strategies and from these teachers select the best strategy to use in a situation, depending on the learning goal, specific context, and needs of individual children at that moment, including children who may need much more support than others even in exploration and play.

10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence.

Children of all ages love to play, and it gives them opportunities to develop physical competence and enjoyment of the outdoors, understand and make sense of their world, interact with others, express and control emotions, develop their symbolic and problem-solving abilities, and practice emerging skills. Research shows the links between play and foundational capacities such as memory, self-regulation, oral language abilities, social skills, and success in school.

Children engage in various kinds of play, such as physical play, object play, pretend or dramatic play, constructive play, and games with rules. Observed in all young animals, play apparently serves important physical, mental, emotional, and social functions for humans and other species, and each kind of play has its own benefits and characteristics. From infancy, children act on the world around them for the pleasure of seeing what happens; for example, repeatedly dropping a spoon on the floor or pulling the cat's tail. At around age 2, children begin to demonstrate symbolic use of objects—for instance, picking up a shell and pretending to drink as from a cup—at least when they have had opportunities to observe others engaging in such make-believe behavior.

From such beginnings, children begin to engage in more mature forms of dramatic play, in which by the age of 3–5 they may act out specific roles, interact with one another in their roles, and plan how the play will go. Such play is influential in developing self-regulation, as children are highly motivated to stick to the roles and rules of the play, and thus grow in the ability to inhibit their impulses, act in coordination with others, and make plans. High-level dramatic play produces documented cognitive, social, and emotional benefits. However, with children spending more time in adult-directed activities and media use, forms of child play characterized by imagination and rich social interactions seem to be declining. Active scaffolding of imaginative play is needed in early childhood settings if children are to develop the sustained, mature dramatic play that contributes significantly to their self-regulation and other cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional benefits. Adults can use proven methods to promote children's extended engagement in make-believe play as well as in games with rules and other kinds of high-level play. Rather than detracting from academic learning, play appears to support the abilities that underlie such learning and thus to promote school success.

11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged to achieve at a level just beyond their current mastery, and also when they have many opportunities to practice newly acquired skills.

Human beings, especially children, are motivated to understand or do what is just beyond their current understanding or mastery. Effective teachers create a rich learning environment to activate that motivation, and they make use of strategies to promote children's undertaking and mastering of new and progressively more advanced challenges.

In a task just beyond a child's independent reach, adults and more-competent peers contribute significantly to the child's development by providing the support or assistance that allows the child to succeed at that task. Once children make this stretch to a new level in a supportive context, they can go on to use the skill independently and in a variety of contexts, laying the foundation for the next challenge. Provision of

such support, often called *scaffolding*, is a key feature of effective teaching.

At the same time, children need to be successful in new tasks a significant proportion of the time in order for their motivation and persistence to be maintained. Confronted by repeated failure, most children will simply stop trying. Repeated opportunity to practice and consolidate new skills and concepts is also essential in order for children to reach the threshold of mastery at which they can go on to use this knowledge or skill and apply it in new situations. Young children engage in a great deal of practice during play and in other child-guided contexts.

To set challenging, achievable goals for children and to provide the right amount and type of scaffolding require knowledge of child development and learning, including familiarity with the paths and sequences that children are known to follow in acquiring specific skills, concepts, and abilities. This general knowledge, along with what the teacher learns from close observation and probing of the individual child's thinking, is critical to matching curriculum and teaching experiences to that child's emerging competencies so as to be challenging but not frustrating.

12. Children's experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning, such as persistence, initiative, and flexibility; in turn, these dispositions and behaviors affect their learning and development.

The National Education Goals Panel and its Goal One Technical Planning Group identified "approaches to learning" as one of five aspects of school readiness. Focused on the *how* rather than the *what* of learning, approaches to learning involve both children's feelings about learning (including their interest, pleasure, and motivation to learn) and children's behavior when learning (including attention, persistence, flexibility, and self-regulation).

Even in the early years, children differ in their approaches to learning. These differences may influence children's school readiness and school success. For example, children who start school more eager to learn tend to do better in reading and mathematics than do less motivated children. Children with more positive learning behaviors, such as initiative, attention, and persistence, later develop stronger language skills. Moreover, children with greater self-regulation and other "learning-related skills" in kindergarten are more skilled in reading and mathematics in later grades.

Although temperament and other inherent differences may affect children's approaches to learning, their experiences in families and early education programs have a major influence. Programs can implement evidence-based strategies that will promote positive approaches to learning. These strategies include strengthening relationships with children; working with families; and selecting effective curriculum, assessments, and teaching methods.

* * *

Self Check 1.4. True/False

___ 1. Children's development in any one domain can limit or facilitate their development in the other domains.

___ 2. Children's development occurs in an orderly sequence, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on abilities, skills, and knowledge already acquired.

___ 3. Almost all children develop at the same rate as other children their age.

___ 4. A child's age is the best indicator of the level of the child's development.

___ 5. All children have their own strengths, needs, and interests.

___ 6. At certain times in the life span, some kinds of learning and development occur most efficiently.

___ 7. Behavioral knowledge refers to events that children experience firsthand.

___ 8. Secure, consistent relationships with responsive adults contribute to children's optimum development.

___ 9. A child's development and learning are influenced by the social and cultural context of the child's family, educational setting, community, and the broader society.

___10. Children construct their knowledge and understanding of the world from their own personal experiences as well as from their experiences with other people, books, and the media.

___11. Play is the ideal context for children's learning.

___12. Children need many opportunities to practice skills they have learned.

___13. Scaffolding refers to support that allows the child to advance to a new level of development.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. F, 4. F, 5. T, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T, 11. T, 12. T, 13. T,)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 3 and 4 of Self Check 1.4 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

3. Development proceeds at varying rates form child to child as well as unevenly within different areas of each child's functioning.

4. There is enormous variation among children of the same chronological age. A child's age is only a crude index of developmental abilities and interests.

* * *

Guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice

Practice that promotes young children's optimal learning and development—what this statement terms developmentally appropriate practice—is grounded both in the research on child development and learning and in the knowledge base regarding educational effectiveness in early care and education.

But whether or not what actually happens in the classroom is, in practice, developmentally appropriate is the result of myriad decisions at all levels—by policy makers, administrators, teachers, and families about the care and education of young children. Effective early childhood professionals draw on all the principles of child development and learning outlined, as well as the knowledge base on effective practices, and they apply the information in their practice.

The following guidelines address decisions that early childhood professionals make in the five key (and interrelated) areas of practice: (1) creating a caring community of learners, (2) teaching to enhance development and learning, (3) planning curriculum to achieve important goals, (4) assessing children's development and learning, and (5) establishing reciprocal relationships with families.

1. Creating a caring community of learners

Because early childhood settings tend to be children's first communities outside the home, the character of these communities is very influential in development. How children expect to be treated and how they treat others is significantly shaped in the early childhood setting. In developmentally appropriate practice, practitioners create and foster a "community of learners"that supports *all* children to develop and learn. The role of the community is to provide a physical, emotional, and cognitive environment conducive to that development and learning. The foundation for the community is consistent, positive, caring relationships between the adults and children, among children, among teachers, and between teachers and families. It is the responsibility of all members of the learning community to consider and contribute to one another's well-being and learning.

To create a caring community of learners, practitioners ensure that the following occur for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Each member of the community is valued by the others. By observing and participating in the community, children learn about themselves and their world and also how to develop positive, constructive relationships with other people. Each child has unique strengths, interests, and perspectives to contribute. Children learn to respect and acknowledge differences of all kinds and to value each person.

B. Relationships are an important context through which children develop and learn. Children construct their understandings about the world around them through interactions with other members of the community (both adults and peers). Opportunities to play together, collaborate on investigations and projects, and talk with peers and adults enhance children's development and learning. Interacting in small groups provides a context for children to extend their thinking, build on one another's ideas, and cooperate to solve problems. (Also see guideline 5, "Establishing Reciprocal Relationships with Families.")

C. Each member of the community respects and is accountable to the others to behave in a way that is conducive to the learning and well-being of all.

(1) Teachers help children develop responsibility and self-regulation. Recognizing that such abilities and behaviors develop with experience and time, teachers consider how to foster such development in their interactions with each child and in their curriculum planning.

(2) Teachers are responsible at all times for all children under their supervision, monitoring, anticipating, preventing, and redirecting behaviors not conducive to learning or disrespectful of the community, as well as teaching prosocial behaviors.

(3) Teachers set clear and reasonable limits on children's behavior and apply those limits consistently. Teachers help children be accountable to themselves and to others for their behavior. In the case of preschool and older children, teachers engage children in developing their own community rules for behavior.

(4) Teachers listen to and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations, respond with respect in ways that children can understand, guide children to resolve conflicts, and model skills that help children to solve their own problems.

(5) Teachers themselves demonstrate high levels of responsibility and self-regulation in their interactions with other adults (colleagues, family members) and with children.

D. Practitioners design and maintain the physical environment to protect the health and safety of the learning community members, specifically in support of young children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment. The daily schedule provides a balance of rest and active movement. Outdoor experiences, including opportunities to interact with the natural world, are provided for children of all ages.

E. Practitioners ensure members of the community feel psychologically safe. The overall social and emotional climate is positive.

(1) Interactions among community members (administrators, teachers, families, children), as well as the experiences provided by teachers, leave participants feeling secure, relaxed, and comfortable rather than disengaged, frightened, worried, or unduly stressed.

(2) Teachers foster in children an enjoyment of and engagement in learning.

(3) Teachers ensure that the environment is organized and the schedule follows an orderly routine that provides a stable structure within which development and learning can take place. While the environment's elements are dynamic and changing, overall it still is predictable and comprehensible from a child's point of view.

(4) Children hear and see their home language and culture reflected in the daily interactions and activities of the classroom.

2. Teaching to enhance development and learning

From birth, a child's relationships and interactions with adults are critical de-

terminants of development and learning. At the same time, children are active constructors of their own understanding of the world around them; as such, they benefit from initiating and regulating their own learning activities and from interacting with peers. Developmentally appropriate teaching practices provide an optimal balance of adult-guided and child-guided experiences. "*Adult-guided* experience proceeds primarily along the lines of the teacher's goals, but is also shaped by the children's active engagement; *child-guided* experience proceeds primarily along the lines of children's interests and actions, with strategic teacher support." But whether a learning experience is adult- or child-guided, in developmentally appropriate practice it is the teacher who takes responsibility for stimulating, directing, and supporting children's development and learning by providing the experiences that each child needs.

The following describe teaching practices that are developmentally appropriate for young children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Teachers are responsible for fostering the caring learning community through their teaching.

B. Teachers make it a priority to know each child well, and also the people most significant in the child's life.

(1) Teachers establish positive, personal relationships with each child and with each child's family to better understand that child's individual needs, interests, and abilities and that family's goals, values, expectations, and childrearing practices. (Also see guideline 5, "Establishing Reciprocal Relationships with Families.") Teachers talk with each child and family (with a community translator, if necessary, for mutual understanding) and use what they learn to adapt their actions and planning.

(2) Teachers continually gather information about children in a variety of ways and monitor each child's learning and development to make plans to help children progress. (Also see guideline 4, "Assesssing Children's Development and Learning.")

(3) Teachers are alert to signs of undue stress and traumatic events in each child's life and employ strategies to reduce stress and support the development of resilience.

C. Teachers take responsibility for knowing what the desired goals for the program are and how the program's curriculum is intended to achieve those goals. They carry out that curriculum through their teaching in ways that are geared to young children in general and these children in particular. Doing this includes following the predictable sequences in which children acquire specific concepts, skills, and abilities and by building on prior experiences and understandings. (Also see guideline 3, "Planning Curriculum to Achieve Important Goals.")

D. Teachers plan for learning experiences that effectively implement a comprehensive curriculum so that children attain key goals across the domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and across the disciplines (language literacy, including English acquisition, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health).

E. Teachers plan the environment, schedule, and daily activities to promote each child's learning and development.

(1) Teachers arrange firsthand, meaningful experiences that are intellectually and creatively stimulating, invite exploration and investigation, and engage children's active, sustained involvement. They do this by providing a rich variety of materials, challenges, and ideas that are worthy of children's attention.

(2) Teachers present children with opportunities to make meaningful choices, especially in child-choice activity periods. They assist and guide children who are not yet able to enjoy and make good use of such periods.

(3) Teachers organize the daily and weekly schedule to provide children with extended blocks of time in which to engage in sustained play, investigation, exploration, and interaction (with adults and peers).

(4) Teachers provide experiences, materials, and interactions to enable children to engage in play that allows them to stretch their boundaries to the fullest in their imagination, language, interaction, and self-regulation as well as to practice their newly acquired skills.

F. Teachers possess an extensive repertoire of skills and strategies they are able to draw on, and they know how and when to choose among them, to effectively promote each child's learning and development at that moment. Those skills include the ability to adapt curriculum, activities, and materials to ensure full participation of *all* children. Those strategies include, but are not limited to, acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, modeling, demonstrating, adding challenge, giving cues or other assistance, providing information, and giving directions.

(1) To help children develop initiative, teachers encourage them to choose and plan their own learning activities.

(2) To stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning, teachers pose problems, ask questions, and make comments and suggestions.

(3) To extend the range of children's interests and the scope of their thought, teachers present novel experiences and introduce stimulating ideas, problems, experiences, or hypotheses.

(4) To adjust the complexity and challenge of activities to suit children's level of skill and knowledge, teachers increase the challenge as children gain competence and understanding.

(5) To strengthen children's sense of competence and confidence as learners, motivation to persist, and willingness to take risks, teachers provide experiences for children to be genuinely successful and to be challenged.

(6) To enhance children's conceptual understanding, teachers use various strategies, including intensive interview and conversation, that encourage children to reflect on and "revisit" their experiences.

(7) To encourage and foster children's learning and development, teachers avoid generic praise ("Good job!") and instead give specific feedback ("You got the same number when you counted the beans again!").

G. Teachers know how and when to *scaffold* children's learning—that is, providing just enough assistance to enable each child to perform at a skill level just beyond what the child can do on his or her own, then gradually reducing the support as the child begins to master the skill, and setting the stage for the next challenge.

(1) Teachers recognize and respond to the reality that in any group, children's skills will vary and they will need different levels of support. Teachers also know that any one child's level of skill and need for support will vary over time.

(2) Scaffolding can take a variety of forms; for example, giving the child a hint, adding a cue, modeling the skill, or adapting the materials and activities. It can be provided in a variety of contexts, not only in planned learning experiences but also in play, daily routines, and outdoor activities.

(3) Teachers can provide the scaffolding (e.g., the teacher models the skill) or peers can (e.g., the child's learning buddy models); in either case, it is the teacher who recognizes and plans for each child's need for support and assistance.

H. Teachers know how and when to use the various learning formats/contexts most strategically.

(1) Teachers understand that each major learning format or context (e.g., large group, small group, learning center, routine) has its own characteristics, functions, and value.

(2) Teachers think carefully about which learning format is best for helping children achieve a desired goal, given the children's ages, development, abilities, temperaments, etc.

I. When children have missed some of the learning opportunities necessary for school success (most often children from low-income households), programs and teachers provide them with even more extended, enriched, and intensive learning experiences than are provided to their peers.

(1) Teachers take care not to place these children under added pressure. Such pressure on children already starting out at a disadvantage can make school a frustrating and discouraging experience, rather than an opportunity to enjoy and succeed at learning.

(2) To enable these children to make optimal progress, teachers are highly intentional in use of time, and they focus on key skills and abilities through highly engaging experiences.

(3) Recognizing the self-regulatory, linguistic, cognitive, and social benefits that high-quality play affords, teachers do not reduce play opportunities that these children critically need. Instead, teachers scaffold and model aspects of rich, mature play.

J. Teachers make experiences in their classrooms accessible and responsive to *all* children and their needs—including children who are English language learners, have special needs or disabilities, live in poverty or other challenging circumstances, or are from different cultures.

(1) Teachers incorporate a wide variety of experiences, materials and equipment, and teaching strategies to accommodate the range of children's individual differences in development, skills and abilities, prior experiences, needs, and interests.

(2) Teachers bring each child's home culture and language into the shared culture of the learning community so that the unique contributions of that home culture and language can be recognized and valued by the other community members, and the child's connection with family and home is supported.

(3) Teachers include all children in all of the classroom activities and encourage children to be inclusive in their behaviors and interactions with peers.

(4) Teachers are prepared to meet special needs of individual children, including children with disabilities and those who exhibit unusual interests and skills. Teachers use all the strategies identified here, consult with appropriate specialists and the child's family, and see that the child gets the adaptations and specialized services he or she needs to succeed in the early childhood setting.

Self Check 1.5. True/False

___ 1. Children learn best when working with other children in large groups.

___ 2. If young children have opportunities to play together with other children, they have little need for interaction with adults.

___ 3. An ideal early childhood learning environment provides a balance of rest and active movement for children throughout the day.

___ 4. An early childhood program should protect children's psychological safety by helping them feel secure and relaxed.

___ 5. An ideal early childhood learning environment should be organized, orderly, and unchanging.

___ 6. It is important for teachers to listen to children.

___ 7. If the activities in an early childhood program are appropriate for the child's age, there is little reason for teachers to spend time observing and recording the behavior of individual children.

___ 8. Teachers should be aware of undue stress in children's lives and help children develop resilience.

___ 9. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide children with a rich variety of worthwhile learning experiences.

___10. Teachers should give children opportunities to make choices for themselves.

___11. Children learn best in very short blocks of time.

___12. Children's challenges should suit their individual level of skill and knowledge.

___13. Setting clear, consistent, fair limits helps children develop self-regulation.

(1. F, 2. F, 3. T, 4. T, 5. F, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T, 11. F, 12. T, 13. T)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 1, 2, 5, 7 and 11 of Self Check 1.5 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

1. Each major learning format or context has its own characteristics, functions, and value. Teachers must carefully consider which format is best for helping children achieve a desired goal.

2. Opportunities to play together and talk with peers and adults enhance children's development and learning.

5. While an early childhood learning environment should be organized and orderly, the elements are dynamic and constantly changing to accommodate varying stages of development and optimal learning.

7. Effective teachers continually gather information about children in a variety of ways and monitor each child's learning and development to make plans to help children progress.

11. Extended blocks of time provide opportunities for children to engage in sustained play, investigation, exploration, and interaction.

* * *

3. Planning curriculum to achieve important goals

The curriculum consists of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and understandings children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which those gains will occur. Implementing a curriculum always yields outcomes of some kind—but *which* outcomes those are and *how* a program achieves them are critical. In developmentally appropriate practice, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant. The curriculum does this through learning experiences (including play, small group, large group, interest centers, and routines) that reflect what is known about young children in general and about these children in particular, as well as about the sequences in which children acquire specific concepts, skills, and abilities, building on prior experiences.

Because children learn more in programs where there is a well planned and implemented curriculum, it is important for every school and early childhood program to have its curriculum in written form. Teachers use the curriculum and their knowledge of children's interests in planning relevant, engaging learning experiences; and they keep the curriculum in mind in their interactions with children throughout the day. In this way they ensure that children's learning experiences—in both adult-guided and child-guided contexts—are consistent with the program's goals for children and connected within an organized framework. At the same time, developmentally appropriate practice means teachers have flexibility—and the expertise to exercise that flexibility effectively—in how they design and carry out curricular experiences in their classrooms.

The following describe curriculum planning that is developmentally appropriate for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Desired goals that are important in young children's learning and development have been identified and clearly articulated.

(1) Teachers consider what children should know, understand, and be able to do across the domains of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development and across the disciplines, including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health.

(2) If state standards or other mandates are in place, teachers become thoroughly familiar with these; teachers add to these any goals to which the standards have given inadequate weight.

(3) Whatever the source of the goals, teachers and administrators ensure that goals are clearly defined for, communicated to, and understood by all stakeholders, including families.

B. The program has a comprehensive, effective curriculum that targets the identified goals, including all those foundational for later learning and school success.

(1) Whether or not teachers were participants in the decision about the curriculum, they familiarize themselves with it and consider its comprehensiveness in addressing all important goals.

(2) If the program is using published curriculum products, teachers make adaptations to meet the learning needs of the children they teach.

(3) If practitioners develop the curriculum themselves, they make certain it targets the identified goals and they use strong, up-to-date resources from experts to ensure that curriculum content is robust and comprehensive.

C. Teachers use the curriculum framework in their planning to ensure there is ample attention to important learning goals and to enhance the coherence of the classroom experience for children.

(1) Teachers are familiar with the understandings and skills key for that age group in each domain (physical, social, emotional, cognitive), including how learning and development in one domain impact the other domains.

(2) In their planning and follow-through, teachers use the curriculum framework along with what they know (from their observation and other assessment) about the children's interests, progress, language proficiency, and learning needs. They carefully shape and adapt the experiences they provide children to enable each child to reach the goals outlined in the curriculum.

(3) In determining the sequence and pace of learning experiences, teachers consider the developmental paths that children typically follow and the typical sequences in which skills and concepts develop. Teachers use these with an eye to moving all children forward in all areas, adapting when necessary for individual children. When children have missed some of the learning opportunities that promote school success, teachers must adapt the curriculum to help children advance more quickly.

D. Teachers make meaningful connections a priority in the learning experiences they provide children, to reflect that all learners, and certainly young children, learn best when the concepts, language, and skills they encounter are related to something they know and care about, and when the new learnings are themselves interconnected in meaningful, coherent ways.

(1) Teachers plan curriculum experiences that integrate children's learning *within* and *across* the domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and the disciplines (including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health).

(2) Teachers plan curriculum experiences to draw on children's own interests and introduce children to things likely to interest them, in recognition that developing and extending children's interests is particularly important during the preschool years, when children's ability to focus their attention is in its early stages.

(3) Teachers plan curriculum experiences that follow logical sequences and that allow for depth and focus. That is, the experiences do not skim lightly over a great many content areas, but instead allow children to spend sustained time with a more select set.

E. Teachers collaborate with those teaching in the preceding and subsequent grade levels, sharing information about children and working to increase the continuity and coherence across ages/grades, while protecting the integrity and appropriateness of practices at each level.

F. In the care of infants and toddlers, practitioners plan curriculum (although they may not always call it that). They develop plans for the important routines and experiences that will promote children's learning and development and enable them to attain desired goals.

4. Assessing children's development and learning

Assessment of children's development and learning is essential for teachers and programs in order to plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the classroom experiences they provide. Assessment also is a tool for monitoring children's progress toward a program's desired goals. In developmentally appropriate practice, the experiences and the assessments are linked (the experiences are developing what is being assessed, and vice versa); both are aligned with the program's desired outcomes or goals for children. Teachers cannot be intentional about helping children to progress unless they know where each child is with respect to learning goals.

Sound assessment of young children is challenging because they develop and learn in ways that are characteristically uneven and embedded within the specific cultural and linguistic contexts in which they live. For example, sound assessment takes into consideration such factors as a child's facility in English and stage of linguistic development in the home language. Assessment that is not reliable or valid, or that is used to label, track, or otherwise harm young children, is not developmentally appropriate practice.

The following describe sound assessment that is developmentally appropriate for children from birth through the primary grades.

A. Assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful. The results of assessment are used to inform the planning and implementing of experiences, to communicate with the child's family, and to evaluate and improve teachers' and the program's effectiveness.

B. Assessment focuses on children's progress toward goals that are developmentally and educationally significant.

C. There is a system in place to collect, make sense of, and use the assessment information to guide what goes on in the classroom (formative assessment). Teachers use this information in planning curriculum and learning experiences and in moment-to-moment interactions with children—that is, teachers continually engage in assessment for the purpose of improving teaching and learning.

D. The methods of assessment are appropriate to the developmental status and experiences of young children, and they recognize individual variation in learners and allow children to demonstrate their competence in different ways. Methods appropriate to the classroom assessment of young children, therefore, include results of teachers' observations of children, clinical interviews, collections of children's work samples, and their performance on authentic activities.

E. Assessment looks not only at what children can do independently but also at what they can do with assistance from other children or adults. Therefore, teachers assess children as they participate in groups and other situations that are providing scaffolding.

F. In addition to this assessment by teachers, input from families as well as children's own evaluations of their work are part of the program's overall assessment strategy.

G. Assessments are tailored to a specific purpose and used only for the purpose for which they have been demonstrated to produce reliable, valid information.

H. Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment or placement, are never made on the basis of results from a single developmental assessment or screening instrument/device but are based on multiple sources of relevant information, including that obtained from observations of and interactions with children by teachers and parents (and specialists, as needed).

I. When a screening or other assessment identifies children who may have

special learning or developmental needs, there is appropriate follow-up, evaluation, and, if indicated, referral. Diagnosis or labeling is never the result of a brief screening or one-time assessment. Families should be involved as important sources of information.

5. Establishing reciprocal relationships with families

Developmentally appropriate practices derive from deep knowledge of child development principles and of the program's children in particular, as well as the context within which each of them is living. The younger the child, the more necessary it is for practitioners to acquire this particular knowledge through relationships with children's families. Practice is not developmentally appropriate if the program limits "parent involvement" to scheduled events (valuable though these may be), or if the program/family relationship has a strong "parent education" orientation. Parents do not feel like partners in the relationship when staff members see themselves as having all the knowledge and insight about children and view parents as lacking such knowledge.

Such approaches do not adequately convey the complexity of the partnership between teachers and families that is a fundamental element of good practice. The following describe the kind of relationships that are developmentally appropriate for children (from birth through the primary grades), in which family members and practitioners work together as members of the learning community.

A. In reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families, there is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals. (Also see guideline 1, "Creating a Caring Community of Learners.")

B. Practitioners work in collaborative partnerships with families, establishing and maintaining regular, frequent two-way communication with them (with families who do not speak English, teachers should use the language of the home if they are able or try to enlist the help of bilingual volunteers).

C. Family members are welcome in the setting, and there are multiple opportunities for family participation. Families participate in program decisions about their children's care and education.

D. Teachers acknowledge a family's choices and goals for the child and respond with sensitivity and respect to those preferences and concerns, but without abdicating the responsibility that early childhood practitioners have to support children's learning and development through developmentally appropriate practices.

E. Teachers and the family share with each other their knowledge of the particular child and understanding of child development and learning as part of day-to-day communication and in planned conferences. Teachers support families in ways that maximally promote family decision-making capabilities and competence.

F. Practitioners involve families as a source of information about the child (before program entry and on an ongoing basis) and engage them in the planning for their child.

G. The program links families with a range of services, based on identified resources, priorities, and concerns.

Policy considerations

Teachers and administrators in early childhood education play a critical role in shaping the future of our citizenry and our democracy. Minute to minute, day to day, month to month, they provide the consistent, compassionate, respectful relationships that our children need to establish strong foundations of early learning. By attending to the multiple domains of development and the individual needs of those in their care, early childhood professionals who employ developmentally appropriate practices engage young children in rich out-of-home early learning experiences that prepare them for future learning and success in life.

Regardless of the resources available, early childhood professionals have an ethical responsibility to practice according to the standards of their profession. It is unrealistic, however, to expect that they can fully implement those standards and practices without public policies and funding that support a system of early childhood education that is grounded in providing high-quality developmentally appropriate experiences for all children.

The goal must be advancement in both realms: more early childhood professionals engaging in developmentally appropriate practices, and more policy makers establishing policies and committing public funds to support such practices.

Many elements of developmentally appropriate practice should be reflected in our federal, state, and local policies. Policy areas that are particularly critical for developing a high-quality, well financed system of early childhood education, which includes the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice, must include at a minimum: early learning standards for children and related/aligned curricula and assessment; a comprehensive professional development and compensation system; a program quality rating and improvement system to improve program quality as well as to inform the families, the public, and policy makers about quality; comprehensive and coordinated services for children; attention to program evaluation; and commitment of additional public funds to support program affordability and quality in every setting.

NAEYC regularly provides information to inform advocates and policy makers in their efforts to establish sound policies in these areas.

* * *

Self Check 1.6. True/False

___ 1. The early childhood curriculum should consist of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and understandings children are to acquire and the plans for helping them do so.

___ 2. Curriculum goals should be clearly defined for and communicated to children's families.

___ 3. Developmentally appropriate curriculum builds on what children already know to help them acquire new skills and concepts.

___ 4. In developmentally appropriate curriculum teachers continually observe children to assess their progress and the appropriateness of the early childhood program.

___ 5. Programs to help children with special developmental needs should be based on observations of the individual children.

___ 6. The only meaningful and useful assessments of children's development and needs are those assessments based on observations of what each child is able to do independently.

___ 7. Developmentally appropriate practice requires that choices and goals for children's care and education be based strictly on the teacher's professional knowledge of what is best for children without parents' involvement.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. F, 7. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 6 and 7 of Self Check 1.6 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

6. Meaningful assessment looks not only at what children can do independently but also at what they can do with assistance from other children or adults.

7. Effective teachers acknowledge a family's choices and goals for the child and respond with sensitivity and respect for those preferences and concerns.

* * *

Moving from either/or to both/and thinking in early childhood practice

Many questions about developmentally appropriate practice for young children require complex responses. The 1996 edition of the NAEYC Position Statement listed the following examples:

- Children construct their own understanding of concepts, **and** they benefit from instruction by more competent peers and adults.
- Children benefit from opportunities to see connections across disciplines through integration of curriculum **and** from opportunities to engage in in-depth study within a content area.
- Children benefit from predictable structure and orderly routine in the learning environment **and** from the teacher's flexibility and spontaneity in responding to their emerging ideas, needs, and interests.
- Children benefit from opportunities to make meaningful choices about what they will do and learn **and** from having a clear understanding of the boundaries within which choices are permissible.
- Children benefit from situations that challenge them to work at the edge of their developing capacities **and** from ample opportunities to practice newly acquired skills and to acquire the disposition to persist.
- Children benefit from opportunities to collaborate with their peers and acquire a sense of being part of a community **and** from being treated as individuals with their own strengths, interests, and needs.
- Children need to develop a positive sense of their own self-identity **and** respect for other people whose perspectives and experiences may be different from their own.
- Children have enormous capacities to learn and almost boundless curiosity about the world, **and** they have recognized, age-related limits on their cognitive and linguistic capacities.
- Children benefit from engaging in self-initiated, spontaneous play **and** from teacher-planned and -structured activities, projects, and experiences.

You will likely think of many more examples that illustrate the interrelationships among the principles of child development and learning or among the guidelines for early childhood practice.

Components of a Developmentally Appropriate Child Care Setting

We have mentioned that the activities in a developmentally appropriate early childhood program should be planned based on children's developmental needs. The physical setting for child care is also an important consideration in providing developmentally appropriate care.

Decisions about the amount of space, the use of space, furnishings, child:staff ratios, group sizes, and equipment must take into consideration children's developmental needs as well as their health, safety, and welfare.

Information in the following sections is based on generally accepted standards for children's well-being. However, each facility must know and follow its on state's rules and regulations. If your state's regulations differ from information presented in this course, you must follow your state's rules.

Physical Plant: Space and Furnishings

Children need plenty of safe space in which they can move about freely without being crowded by too many people, too many toys, or too much furniture. Children's space must be maintained in a safe, uncluttered, clean, sanitary manner at all times.

How much space do children need? State regulations specify the minimum amount of space per child in a child care facility. Most states require no less than 35 square feet of usable floor space for each child. This does not include passageways, kitchens, bathrooms, coat storage areas, offices, storage areas, isolation quarters, staff room, furnace room, parts of rooms occupied by stationary equipment, and areas not at all times available to children, including areas used exclusively for large muscle activity, napping or eating. All facilities must comply with their state's space requirements.

Every child care facility must also have readily accessible outdoor play space that is adequate for active play. State requirements for outdoor play space are usually 75 square feet per child two years of age or older using the space at a given time and 35 square feet per child younger than two years of age using the space at a given time. More than that is just that much better. Outdoor play space must be kept free of hazards at all times.

Early childhood facilities should also have

- a separate quiet area

A separate quiet area, which can be adequately supervised, should be provided for children who become ill or who develop symptoms of illness.

- sanitary toilet facilities

Convenient, adequate and sanitary toilet facilities must be provided for the children in a separate, properly ventilated room readily accessible to children.

Most states specify the number of toilets and sinks required for the number of children served by an early childhood facility. All facilities must comply with their state's specific requirements for toilet facilities. At a minimum, one toilet and one wash basin should be available for every group of 15 children, or part thereof. One toilet for every 10 children is recommended.

Toilet rooms and fixtures must be kept in a sanitary condition at all times. Potty chair receptacles must be emptied and rinsed and the potty chair and receptacle must be disinfected immediately after each use with a chlorine bleach solution of one tablespoon to one quart of water, made fresh daily.

- sleeping arrangements

A firm sanitary, washable, cot, bed or two-inch thick padded mat or sleeping bag of adequate size must be provided for all children 12 months old or older who require a rest period.

A safe, washable crib must be provided for the use of each child younger than 12 months old who naps or sleeps. Cribs must be washed and disinfected between changes in occupancy.

Cribs, cots, beds, and/or mats must be at least two feet apart from each other.

Resting/napping places must be located in safe areas of the facility where there is no draft and where children will not be stepped on or block safe exit from the room or building.

Individual sanitary bed coverings must be available, as needed, for each child requiring a rest period.

- storage space

The facility should have sufficient storage space for clothing and personal belongings to accommodate the clothing and personal belongings of as many children as are in the licensed capacity of the facility. Storage space should be arranged so that each child's personal items may be stored separately. Coat hooks should be spaced so that coats and other outer garments do not touch each other. For children 2 years of age and older, the space for outer garment storage shall be at child level.

The facility must also have storage space for cots, bedding, supplies, and equipment not in use.

- space for eating and food preparation

In a facility in which meals are served, (1) seating should be at least equal to the licensed capacity of the facility, excluding infants, so that the children can be served at the same time, and there should be space at a table for each child or, (2) if meals are served in a central lunchroom, seating and tablespace must be at least equal to the number of children to be served in a shift.

In a facility in which meals are prepared or heated on the premises, the kitchen should be equipped with a stove with an oven, a refrigerator, a sink and utensils that are necessary to prepare and serve meals. The sink must be used exclusively for food preparation and dishwashing.

Food preparation tables must be durable, and surfaces shall be smooth, non-absorbent and easily cleanable. All equipment and utensils must have smooth, hard surfaces, be easily cleanable, in good repair, durable, non-toxic and free of cracks, seams, chips and roughened areas, and shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. After cleaning, utensils must be stored in a clean, dry place and protected from contamination. Single-service utensils must be non-toxic, stored in a clean, dry place, kept covered, and may not be reused.

All facilities must comply with their state's regulations regarding space and procedures for food preparation, storage, and serving.

* * *

To ensure that the space occupied by children is safe and comfortable for the children, state regulations typically require the following:

- All buildings used for day care or other early childhood programs must comply with local building codes and fire prevention codes.
- Non-residential buildings must be inspected and approved for use as a child care facility.
- Room surfaces, furniture, or any other equipment, materials, or furnishings that may be used by children or that are within children's reach must be free of toxic paints or finishes.
- Peeling or damaged paint or plaster must be repaired promptly.
- Shelves should be provided for equipment and supplies in rooms used by children. Equipment and supplies should be arranged in an orderly fashion so that children

may select, use, and replace items.

- Furnishings must be durable and safe, with no sharp, rough, loose, or pointed edges.
- Tables and seating must be scaled to the proper height and size for the children's comfort and reach.
- A safe supply of drinking water must be available to children at all times (1) from a drinking fountain of the angle jet type or (2) by use of disposable cups. Common use of drinking cups should never be allowed and is specifically prohibited in most states.
- Windows and doors that are used for ventilation must be screened.
- Clear glass panels must be marked clearly to avoid accidental impact. Glass in outside windows less than 32 inches above the floor level must be of safety grade or otherwise protected by use of barriers to avoid accidental impact.
- Where child care is provided above the first floor, windows on such floors must be protected by barriers or locking devices to prevent children from falling out of the windows.
- An operable flashlight or battery powered lantern must be kept in the child care area. Such equipment must be properly maintained for use in the event of a power failure.
- Every closet door latch must be constructed to enable children to open the door from inside the closet. Every bathroom door lock must be designed to permit opening of the locked door from the outside in an emergency. The opening device must be readily accessible to the staff.
- Areas that will be used by the children must be well-lighted and well-ventilated. Heating, ventilation and lighting equipment must be adequate for the protection of the health of the children. A temperature of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended in all rooms occupied by children. Some means of air circulation, such as fans or air conditioning, should be provided if the inside temperature exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Some state regulations specify minimum and maximum temperatures at which children's space must be maintained.
- Every room occupied by children must have two exits unless the room opens directly to the outdoors at ground level. The emergency evacuation and relocation plan should be approved by the fire marshal and must be posted in each room that is used by children.
- Every building occupied by children must have at least two exits to the outside. An exit through a kitchen or other hazardous area cannot be one of the required exits unless specifically approved in writing by the fire marshal. Exits should be clearly marked. If one of these exits is a window, it must be easily opened.
- If any exit door opens into a fenced yard, the children must be able to open the door easily from the inside. No doors that are blocked or locked may be counted as an exit.
- A minimum clear width of 3 feet is recommended for all exits and exit passageways, although some states allow a window that is at least 24" in its smallest dimension to count as an exit. All exits must be unobstructed by furniture or other objects.
- All exits must ***always*** be uncluttered.
- Children must not be cared for on any level above or below the exit level unless the facility obtains written approval from the fire marshal.
- All children and staff must be able to safely exit the building within three minutes.
- Doors to basements and/or furnace rooms must be kept closed.
- The premises shall be maintained to prevent the entrance or harborage of vermin.

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to find out your state's requirements for the home or building in which children are cared for and the furnishings of child care facilities.

Note any differences between the recommendations in this course and your state's regulations. Where differences exist, you must, of course, follow your state's regulations.

Ratios and Group Sizes

Each state determines the maximum number of children that one care provider may care for at a time. The recommendations in this section are based on the National Health and Safety Performance Standards established by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Small Family Child Care Homes

One caregiver in a family child care home should have no more than 6 children over two years of age in care at one time. For each child under two years of age in care, the maximum number of children older than two years should be reduced by 3. Children belonging to the caregiver are counted in this child:staff ratio.

Children Younger than 2 Years	Children Older than 2 Years
0	1-6
1	1-3
2	0

Large Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers

The following chart shows the recommended maximum child:staff ratios and maximum group sizes for large

family child care homes and child care centers.

Age	Maximum Child:Staff Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Birth–12 mos.	3:1	6
13-30 mos.	4:1	8
31-35 mos.	5:1	10
3 years	7:1	14
4 years	8:1	16
5 years	8:1	16
6-8 yrs.	10:1	20
9-12 yrs.	12:1	24

Assignment

Read your state's regulations for child care to find out your state's required child:staff ratios and maximum group sizes.

Program Requirements

The early childhood facility's program must provide activities that are suitable for the developmental level of the individual children in care. Daily activities should provide opportunities for children to

- be successful and feel good about themselves;
- use and develop language;
- use large and small muscles;
- use materials and take part in activities that encourage creativity;
- learn new ideas and skills;
- participate in imaginative play; and
- be exposed to a variety of cultures.

The program schedule should be planned to provide a flexible balance each day of

- active and quiet play;
- individual and group activities;
- indoor and outdoor activities (except during inclement weather or when not advisable for health reasons).

The use of television is *not* recommended. No child should ever be required to watch television. If used, television should only be a supplement to the daily plan for children. Other choices of activities should be available at all times.

The daily program must also provide

- reasonable regularity in eating, napping and other routines;
- daily periods when a variety of experiences are concurrently available for the children to select their own activities;
- protection from excess fatigue and overstimulation.

Routines such as toileting and eating and intervals between activities must be planned to avoid keeping children waiting in lines or assembled in large groups.

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to find out your state's program requirements for child care facilities.

Equipment

To meet children's developmental needs, early childhood facilities should provide equipment that will

- provide large muscle development;
- provide construction activities and develop manipulative skills;
- encourage social interaction;
- provide intellectual stimulation;
- encourage creative expression;
- reflect an awareness of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Facilities must have enough indoor play equipment to allow each child a choice of at least three activities involving equipment when all the children are using equipment.

Facilities must have enough outdoor play equipment to allow each child at least one activity involving equipment when all children are using equipment.

Most state regulations require that indoor and outdoor play equipment be

- safe;
- scaled to the developmental level of the children;
- of sturdy construction, with no sharp, rough, loose, protruding, pinching, or pointed edges or areas of entrapment, in good operating condition, and anchored when necessary;
- placed to avoid danger of injury or collision and to permit freedom of action;
- placed over an energy-absorbing surface when equipment is 4 feet or more in height.

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to find out what the requirements for equipment in an early childhood facility are in your state.

Licensing

Most states require that family child care homes be licensed or at least registered with a state regulatory agency. Most child care centers must also be licensed by the state's regulatory agency.

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to find your state's licensing requirements for family child care homes and child care centers.

Careers in Early Childhood Education

In most areas of the United States today, the demand for high-quality child care is far greater than the supply. The following list identifies careers in early childhood education.

Family child care provider

Center administrator/director

Program director

Child care teacher

Assistant child care teacher

Lesson 2 of this course examines the duties and responsibilities of various jobs in child care facilities.

Self Check 1.7. True/False

___ 1. Children need plenty of uncrowded space to move about.

___ 2. Most state regulations allow one caregiver to care for as many children as she feels that her space will accommodate.

___ 3. Children need opportunities to use large and small muscles every day.

___ 4. Once a week is often enough for children to engage in imaginative play.

___ 5. Television is a valuable part of an early childhood program.

___ 6. The daily program should provide reasonable regularity in eating and napping routines.

___ 7. Early childhood facilities should provide equipment that helps children develop manipulative skills.

___ 8. All climbing equipment should be placed over an energy-absorbing surface.

(1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. F, 5. F, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 2, 4 and 5 of Self Check 1.7 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

2. Each state determines the maximum number of children that one care provider may care for at a time.

4. Daily activities should provide opportunities for children to participate in imaginative play.

5. The use of television is not recommended in any early childhood program.

Lesson 1 Quiz

Please read Lesson 1 two times before attempting its quiz. When you have finished reading this lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at www.CareCourses.com and open your course file to access the Online Quiz for this lesson.

Lesson 2

Child Care Professionals: Characteristics, Roles, and Responsibilities

Learning Objectives

In this lesson you will learn

- the meaning of professionalism in child care
- the satisfactions of child care
- the characteristics of high-quality child care providers
- duties and responsibilities of various jobs in child care
- ethical standards for child care providers

* * *

Child Care Is a Profession

A child care facility, whether it is a family day care home or a large center, is not simply a parking lot where working parents leave their children. Rather, a child care facility should be a place where children learn and grow and thrive while they are cared for by professionals who understand children's needs and characteristics and are able to provide developmentally appropriate experiences.

What Is Professionalism?

The word professionalism has many meanings to people. Some people feel that being professional means "doing it right, over and over." Being a professional is an inner feeling. It is hard to be a professional if you do not feel it inside.

Professionals also realize that they don't know everything there is to know about child care. New research comes out regularly. A professional is dedicated to learn more continually.

Family Child Care Providers

Most people have never thought of people who care for children in their own homes as professionals—even the child care providers themselves. In fact, most people call these caregivers "baby-sitters," including the caregivers themselves.

Babysitting is a very honorable occupation. But a person who cares for children on a regular basis does a great deal more than babysit. This child care provider assumes responsibility for the care, growth, and development of children in their parents' absence. This child care provider is a professional and deserves the respect—and self-respect—due a professional. The job of caregiver is a very important job. In fact, when you realize that children are society's most important resource, you begin to see why this job is one of the most important jobs in the world.

The caregiver's attitude about her profession will show in her home, in her appearance, and in the quality of care she provides for the day children.

Child Care Workers in Centers

Child care teachers working in centers have not always been thought of as professionals. Some people have the notion that "anyone" can do this job. Those who have actually provided child care know better.

Be a Professional

Professionalism must start with the provider. Do you feel like a professional? Do you act like a professional? Only after child care providers see themselves as professionals and act like professionals will others begin to take this view.

VALUE yourself. Take time each day to do something *just for you*.

VALUE your own health. Take as good care of your own health as you do the children's.

VALUE your profession. Think and act like a professional at all times.

Child care can bring many satisfactions.

- You offer a valuable service to the community. You care for society's most valuable resource. You make it possible for other people to do their jobs.
- You can enjoy the creativity and wonder of children.
- You can develop your own creativity every day.

Join a Child Care Association

If there is a child care association in your area, join it. This is especially beneficial for family home child care providers. Child care can be isolated and confining. An association of child care providers can offer a lot of support to the individual caregiver. Involvement in a local child care association can help prevent the isolation many caregivers feel.

Talking with other child care providers may help you deal with problems that you face as a child care provider. A child care association is also a good place for family home child care providers to meet people who may be able to substitute in case of an illness or emergency.

Touching the Future

I don't wear power suits.
Make speeches
Or drive a fancy sports car.

I've never talked on a car phone,
Made a big sale,
Or been elected to the Senate.

I don't "do lunch,"
Have an impressive office ,
Or carry a beeper.

I spend my days wiping away tears,
Giving hugs,
And serving chicken nuggets.

A good day is when I go through a whole day
Without a temper tantrum, bite mark
Or a toilet training accident.

My "office" is a room full of brightly colored toys
And laughing children.

You may not think what I do is very important,
And you may even whisper behind my back,
"What a waste of a good mind."
But I know better.

I make a difference
Because I am changing the world
One child at a time.

Everyday I'm getting the once in a lifetime chance
To touch the future.

I'm proud to say
"I'm a child care provider."

Qualifications for Child Care Professionals

Following is a list of core abilities and indicators for high-quality professional child care providers.

Show respect for diversity

1. Respect individual and cultural differences in actions and words.
2. Work effectively with individuals and groups of diverse backgrounds.
3. Recognize your own prejudices and stereotypes.
4. Communicate in a culturally sensitive manner.

Think critically

1. Demonstrate observation skills.
2. Identify a problem to be solved, task to be performed, or decision to be made.
3. Gather information from multiple sources to complete a task, make a decision, or solve a problem.
4. Evaluate information before acting on it.
5. Make inferences based on evidence.
6. Use relevant and valid criteria to evaluate a solution, process, or decision.
7. Formulate alternative solutions, processes, or decisions and identify consequences for the alternatives.
8. Select a solution, process, or decision that addresses the identified need.

Act responsibly.

1. Set goals.
2. Persevere to meet goals.
3. Maintain self-control in difficult situations.
4. Accurately judge the amount of work you can accomplish.
5. Take care of tools, equipment and supplies.
6. Show up on time and ready to work.
7. Apply ethical work values: keeping confidentiality, putting in a full day's work, and following health and safety standards.
8. Assess your personal values and use them to guide actions and decisions.
9. Recognize your responsibility to personal, social, professional, educational, and natural environments and make informed decisions based on that responsibility.

Apply learning

1. Transfer academic knowledge and principles to life and work situations.
2. Ask for help when you need it.
3. Use reliable and credible resources to meet your needs and the needs of children.

Act with integrity

1. Maintain confidentiality.
2. Adhere to established rules, regulations and policies.
3. Take responsibility for your actions and words.
4. Resolve conflict by finding win/win solutions for all parties involved in the conflict.

Communicate clearly

1. Use bias-free language.
2. Use language that is free of obscenities.
3. Apply listening skills.
4. Apply standard rules of language structure including grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
5. Use tone and volume of voice and nonverbal communication that matches developmental levels of the children in your care.

Maintain Commitment to Life-long Learning

Many opportunities exist for continuing education for early childhood professionals. These include

- self-instruction courses;
- seminars and workshops provided by professional organizations or state licensing agencies, such as a state's TEACH Program or a state Registry;
- articles in professional publications such as *Young Children* (published by NAEYC 800-424-2460, www.naeyc.org), *Dimensions of Early Childhood* (published by Southern Early Childhood Association – 501-663-0353), and *Child Care Information Exchange* (800-221-2864);
- books published by NAEYC (800-424-2460) or Child Care Information Exchange (800-221-2864);
- post-secondary education programs at junior colleges, colleges, and universities.

The more you learn about young children and your profession as an early childhood educator, the happier you are likely to be in your job.

Child Care Provider Traits and Characteristics Self-Assessment

Providing care for children is a demanding yet rewarding profession. What qualities should a caregiver have? Do you have these qualities? Here are some questions to help you decide.

Do you

- enjoy children
- see each child as an individual and try to understand and encourage him or her
- like to do fun things with children
- have a good sense of humor
- understand that children are not adults and must not be expected to act like adults
- have knowledge of practical care or the willingness and ability to acquire that knowledge [Practical care includes the areas of nutrition, discipline and guidance, emergency action, etc.]
- like yourself

Are You

- happy to spend every day with children
- friendly, warm, understanding, and affectionate
- healthy enough to be on the job and with children
- physically strong enough to keep up with children all day, five days a week

Are you willing to

- make every effort to understand each child's special needs
- provide interesting, challenging things for the children to do
- cooperate with those who have the legal responsibility to protect the children in your care
- learn from others

Can you

- keep your self-control when things get tough
- communicate and cooperate with the children's parents [It is ***not*** the caregiver's job to replace or compete with the child's parents.]
- keep a positive attitude when things go wrong

Additional qualifications for family child care providers:

Are you willing to

- accept your work with children as your first and major responsibility while the children are in your home
- share your home and some of your own things with others

Can you

- organize yourself to meet the children's needs, your needs, and your family's needs
- handle the business aspects of family day care

If you answer **yes** to all the questions in this self-assessment, you will probably make a very good caregiver and be happy in this profession.

If you answer **no** to **ANY** of the questions, you should seriously reconsider if this is the right profession for you.

State Regulations

To protect the health, safety, and welfare of children being cared for in early childhood facilities, each state has its own regulations regarding the qualifications a person must have to hold various positions in each type of early childhood facility. State regulations cover

- minimum age for each level of responsibility,
- level of education or training for each level of responsibility,
- amount and type of experience for each level of responsibility,
- health qualifications, and
- criminal background.

In addition to preservice education or training requirements, that is, education or training that a person must have before becoming a teacher or caregiver in an early childhood facility, most states require providers to receive *in-service* training every year, or in some states, every two or three years. *In-service* training is typically measured in clock hours, and the number of training hours that are required, as well as the specific topics that must be covered, vary from state to state. States also specify what forms of in-service training—workshops, lectures, seminars, conferences, self-instruction courses, etc.—will be recognized in their state.

All caregivers and teachers must know and follow their own state's regulations regarding qualifications to become a child care provider and requirements to renew their license or registration.

Assignment

Read through your state's regulations for child care to find out what the requirements for child care administrators and teachers are in your state.

Contact a representative of your state's child care licencing agency to learn what free training, if any, your state offers for child care providers.

Self Check 2.1. True/False

___ 1. A child care professional is dedicated to learn more continually.

___ 2. A child care professional is one who understands children's needs and characteristics.

___ 3. The most accurate description for a family childcare professional is babysitter.

___ 4. Involvement in a child care association can offer support for caregivers.

___ 5. A professional child care provider evaluates information before acting on it.

___ 6. A professional child care provider shows respect for individual and cultural differences.

___ 7. A professional child care provider sets goals and perseveres to meet those goals.

___ 8. A professional child care provider asks for help when it is needed.

___ 9. A professional child care provider always keeps self-control.

___10. A professional child care provider uses tone and volume of voice to match the developmental levels of children in her/his care.

___11. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct requires child care providers to maintain high standards of professional conduct.

___12. A professional child care provider supports families in nurturing children.

___13. Most states regulate the qualifications of child care workers in order to protect children.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T, 11. T, 12. T, 13. T)

Correct Answer for False Self Check Item

3. Family child care providers are professionals in the industry who assume the responsibility for the care, growth, and development of children in their parents' absence.

Responsibilities of Early Childhood Professionals

Children have a right to be loved and cared for. They have a right to feel wanted and protected. They have a right to be safe, comfortable, and well nourished.

Children have these rights just because they are children. And adults, because they are adults, have the responsibility to see that children's needs are met.

The most important decision that working parents must make is choosing a person to care for their children while they are at work. They need the services of a well-trained, competent, mature, professional caregiver.

It must be your goal to be the best caregiver you possibly can be—to assure parents that you are able and willing to

- love and care for their children;
- respect their children;
- provide a safe and pleasant place where their children can play and learn;
- help their children feel comfortable and happy;
- help their children learn self-discipline;
- strengthen their children's self-confidence;
- provide experiences that help their children grow and develop;
- give their children opportunities to be creative;
- provide nutritious meals and snacks for their children (if meals are to be provided by your facility);
- be prepared for emergency situations.

Know and Follow Safety Policies and Procedures

All adults who work with young children must be familiar with safety policies and procedures mandated by their state for early childhood facilities as well as specific policies and procedures followed by the facility at which they work. This includes policies and procedures for emergencies such as fire, tornado, hurricane, flooding, electrical storms, blizzards, wind chill, child endangerment, injuries, terrorism, etc. These policies and procedures will, of course, be different in different parts of the country and for different types and sizes of early childhood facilities.

Records must be kept documenting

- children's whereabouts within the early childhood facility;
- injuries received by children while at the early childhood facility; and
- medications administered.

Most states' child care facility regulations require that all those administering medication have Medication Administration Training (MAT). The log or logs for recording medications dispensed to a child and injuries received by a child should be in a book with stitched binding and pages that are lined and numbered. The pages should not be removed or lines skipped. Entries in medical logs should be made in ink on the date of the occurrence and should be dated and signed or initialed by the person making the entry.

Any injury to a child or evidence of unusual bruises, contusions, lacerations or burns received by a child in or out of the early childhood facility should be recorded in the medications and injury log book and reported immediately to the administrator or other person in charge of the facility. Attendance records, logs that track children's whereabouts within the facility, and medication and injury logs must be accessible to parents and child care licensing officials at all times.

Examples of procedures for administering medications and recording injuries in an early childhood facility are printed in the boxes on this page.

Procedure for Administering Medications

1. Family home childcare providers and center staff may give prescription or nonprescription medication, such as aspirin or cough medicine, to a child or apply parent-provided and labeled sun screen or insect repellant to a child only under the following conditions:

   a. A written authorization dated and signed by the parent is on file.

   b. Prescription medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name and the label includes the dosage and directions for administration.

   b. Non-prescription medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name and the label includes the dosage and directions for administration.

   c. A written record, including type of medication given, dosage, time, date and the name of the person administering the medication, shall be made in a medications and injury log book on the same day that the medication is administered. The recording of the application of sun screen or insect repellant is not required.

2. Medication shall be stored so that it is not accessible to the children.

3. Medication requiring refrigeration shall be kept in the refrigerator in a separate, covered container clearly labeled "medication".

Procedure for Recording Injuries

Use the center medication and injury log to record the following:

1. Any injury that requires first aid or medical attention with date and time of injury.
2. The name of the injured child and part of body involved.
3. Location where injury took place.
4. A description of how the injury occurred.
5. Description of any consumer product involved.
6. Name of staff person responsible for the care of the injured child.
7. Actions taken on behalf of the injured child following the injury.
8. Whether parent was advised of the incident.
9. Description of the injury.

Example: 5/27/04 — Mary Jones fell off monkey bars, face down. Resulting injury was a 2-inch long scrape on right cheek under the eye. Washed scrape and applied cold cloth. Judy Smith

Assignment

Review the policies and procedures for emergencies such as fire, tornado, hurricane, flooding, electrical storms, blizzards, wind chill, child endangerment, injuries, terrorism, etc. that are followed by your early childhood facility.

Request copies of emergency policies and procedures from at least two additional early childhood facilities. How are the various policies and procedures the same? How are they different?

"I'm Not Just a Babysitter"

"Whenever I meet new people and I am asked what I do, I tell them that I am a day-care teacher and work with three-year-olds. People often respond in one of two ways. Either a blank look comes over their faces and they change the conversation topic, or they say something like 'Work! All you do is play with children all day. How can you call that work?' It makes me so mad that other people don't understand that what I do is work. It is hard work, and I'm not just a babysitter."

The general public often underestimates the importance of teachers who work with young children. Unfortunately, the low status assigned to child car workers is indicative of the public's ignorance of the important responsibilities assumed by child care teachers. There is probably even more misunderstanding if the teacher happens to be male.

Childcare providers and early childhood teachers should recognize and appreciate the importance of the preschool years as well as the importance of their own role in providing intellectually stimulating experiences and emotionally supportive environments for young children. As a caregiver or teacher, your work with young children has a significant impact on their daily enjoyment of life and on their potential to grow into competent adults. Many caregivers and teachers find it difficult to share with others exactly what they do and why it is important. If early childhood professionals are to raise the status of their profession, they need to be able to articulate clearly the different roles required of child care providers and teachers.

The behavior of Debby, a fictional child care teacher, illustrates the different roles teachers play in their daily interactions with young children.

The Different Roles of Caregivers of Young Children

Nurturer of the Children

As the children arrive in the morning, Debby gives each one a hug of welcome. She is a source of comfort when the children are frustrated, angry, in pain, needing comfort or help. She is a good friend to the children, sharing their excitement and supporting them when they are scared or unhappy. Debby also promotes the growth of the children's self-help skills by helping them to be competent in feeding, dressing, and going to the bathroom by themselves. With love and affection, Debby nurtures the social and emotional growth of the children.

Designer of the Environment

Before the children arrive in the morning, Debby puts out a variety of new activities. She fills the water table with water and assorted objects (funnels, balls, boat, cups, etc.), she puts out playdough, and she has a new board game ready for play. She designs and organizes the environment so that it is both safe and stimulating. She plans the day so that the children have both active and quiet play opportunities within a smooth running daily schedule. Through good planning and a successful design, she creates an early childhood program that is both enjoyable and interesting to the children.

Observer of the Children

Throughout the day, Debby jots down new things that she learns about each child. Through observing the children's behavior and by interpreting the behavior developmentally, she learns about each child's likes, dislikes, abilities, and moods. She knows that observation is an essential component in successful program planning. She uses her observational skills to tailor the early childhood curriculum to fit the needs of individual children.

Facilitator of Play

During the morning, Debby notices that Steve is having trouble finding something to do. She checks to make sure nothing is wrong, and drawing upon her knowledge of his interests, she suggests that he build a barn for the clay animals he made the day before. Once Steve is settled, Debby checks the room. She gives Jennifer and Tommy new molding objects to use with playdough. She distracts Caitlin before Caitlin grabs the only rocking horse in the room from John. Debby facilitates the children's play by suggesting play options, by setting up new activities, and by providing materials to enhance the play. She knows when to stand back and watch the children play. She also knows when to provide adult direction to avoid child/child conflicts and to maximize the children's creativity.

Model for the Children

Debby is aware of how much the children learn by watching her behavior. She knows that her attitude, enthusiasm, concerns, fears, and moods all affect the children. The more language she uses, the more language the children are able to understand and use. She teaches the children about appropriate social interactions by the way she treats other adults and the children. The children's understanding of the rules that are important to her and her method of discipline influences their behavior. She knows that she is modeling for the children all aspects of living in our society.

Provider of Resources for the Children

Debby makes herself available to the children throughout the day. She responds to their questions, offers them new and interesting ideas, and helps them to learn about the world around them. By accepting the children's feelings and ideas, she builds their feelings of competence. She wants the children to view adults as people who are willing to share information, and who are accessible and responsive.

Entertainer of the Children

At times during the day, Debby leads the children in some group activities – they sing, read stories, dance, and do finger plays. Debby relies on her own imagination and creativity to think up new ways to entertain the children. She knows that when they are bored, she is going to have behavior problems to deal with. By interesting them in activities, child/child and child/adult conflicts are avoided.

Playmate of the Children

At times, Debby is a playmate of the children. She might sit on the floor and build a block structure or participate in a ring-a-round the Rosie over and over again. She knows when her participation facilitates play and when it is a hindrance.

Restrainer of the Children

Debby knows how important it is for her to place consistent and realistic limits on the children. She has defined for the children the actions that are not acceptable in her room. She avoids unnecessary and arbitrary restrictions, but she is very clear about the rules that do exist.

Source: *Early Childhood Exchange,* Summer 1983, Vol. 6, No. 2.

ABCs of a Capable Caregiver

When you work with children, you often see yourself grow as you help guide their growth and development. The role of caregiver requires a positive and thoughtful way of working with others. Many of the personality characteristics listed below are ones you already exhibit. You may find that others are strengthened as you put your best foot forward each day in a caregiver role.

A. Alert to all children for whom you are responsible and to the tasks needing to be done.

B. Bright, being a fast thinker and a sound reasoner.

C. Calm, not easily flustered, when conflicts or competing tasks arise.

D. Dependable in following rules and directions.

E. Enthusiastic about working with children and parents.

F. Fun-loving, enjoying children, and laughing easily with them.

G. Generous with your love, ideas, and energy, sharing these readily with parents, children, and coworkers.

H. Healthy in both mind and body, having the energy to carry on the work for the hours required.

I. Initiating activities that need to be done, and doing them happily, without prodding or pressure.

J. Just and fair to all children, parents, and coworkers regardless of sex, race, religion, income level, age, size, or disability.

K. Knowledgeable about children, families, and child care centers.

L. Loving to children in your care.

M. Mature for your age and experience.

N. Neat and clean in appearance.

O. Organized on the job and at home so needed work gets done with a minimum of strain and confusion.

P. Punctual in arriving for the job and in keeping activities on schedule as required.

Q. Quick to respond to the needs of children, parents, and staff.

R. Resourceful, being able to figure out solutions to new problems and to find creative uses for materials.

S. Strong in body, having stamina for the required work.

T. Thoughtful of others, seeing the children's point of view, and responding to their feelings and needs.

U. Understanding with children.

V. Venturesome in new ideas and new approaches to working with children.

W. Witty, using humor in dealing with children and others.

X. (E)xcited about the future and optimistically looking ahead.

Y. Yearning to be helpful to others.

Z. Zealous for children's rights and causes.

Jobs in Early Childhood Facilities

The exact responsibilities of child care professionals holding various positions within early childhood facilities differ somewhat based on the size of the facility. Typical responsibilities for different levels of responsibility are set forth in the following sample job descriptions

Administrator

Responsible for planning, developing, and administering the center and its program.

Duties and Responsibilities

Responsible for meeting licensing rules, especially sections on organization and administration, physical plan, and personnel except orientation and in-service.

Responsible for the registration and intake of every child enrolled and for parents reading policies and having a chance to read rules.

Attend professional workshops and meetings whenever possible.

Select, care, and maintain equipment and materials in cooperation with program director.

Recruit staff and hire or dismiss staff. Have weekly individual conferences with program director. Delegate administrative responsibility when necessary to a specific person. Be a liaison between the staff and the Board.

Responsible for administrative aspects; e.g., taxes, rent, office supplies, Social Security, statistical reporting, insurance, utilities, payroll, etc.

Keep appropriate records and files.

Set and collect fees.

Do all work necessary for application and renewal for licensing.

Assist the Board with budget development. Be fiscally responsible for executing the budget. Present a monthly financial statement to the Board.

Maintain close touch with the community to foster understanding of the day care program and its needs.

Maintain cooperative and mutually helpful relationship with educational institutions and related groups.

Selection of staff in cooperation with program director and/or Board.

Responsible for overall maintenance of physical plant, vehicle(s), safety, upkeep, sanitation, fire inspections.

Supervision

The program administrator will report to the Board of Directors.

Program Director

Responsible for supervision of the planning and implementation of the program and directing the orientation and in-service training of staff.

Job Responsibilities

Responsible for ensuring that licensing rules are met.

Work toward the state policies and goals of the day care center.

Help each member of the staff develop as much of his/her professional capacities as possible.

Responsible for coordination of educational curriculum of the center in cooperation with the staff.

Responsible for ongoing program supervision.

Schedule staff and classrooms.

Assign workers to specific groups of children.

Call in substitutes, maintain ratios.

Arrange parent conferences as needed.

Conduct regular staff meetings in cooperation with the administrator.

Help plan and attend parent meetings.

Maintain inventory of program supplies and equipment, and submit requests to administrator.

Attend professional workshops and meetings whenever possible.

Plan and conduct orientation training of new staff.

Plan and develop staff in-service. Maintain staff development records.

Responsible for evaluation of staff and volunteers at intervals recommended by Board and/or administrator.

Help keep the entire school attractive, sanitary, and orderly together with the other staff members.

Plan menus with cook.

Work together with the entire staff as a member of a whole team, trying to know all the children in the school.

Foster cooperation relationships with staff, members, and other groups using the building.

Become aware of the wider community with respect to what the teacher can contribute to it and with what the community can contribute to the teacher.

Work with volunteers, student teachers, and students on special assignments. Welcome observers as part of center's service to the wider community.

Enable parent participation in all levels of the program, facilitate regular parent meetings, encourage parent participation in groups such as 4-Cs, and help with parental counseling.

Help plan and formulate changes in center’s functions.

Acquaint and train all staff with child abuse laws.

Participate in interviewing new staff.

Coordinate transportation program if applicable.

Supervision

The program director will receive supervision from the administrator.

Child Care Teacher

This position requires a person who is able to plan and carry out a daily program designed to meet the physical and developmental needs of a group of children. This person must be able to effectively supervise other staff assisting in the classroom, be sensitive to the needs of individual children, and relate well to both children and adults.

Job Responsibilities

Plan, schedule, and implement the daily program of appropriate developmental

experiences for a classroom group of children.

Provide care and protection for assigned children.

Maintain a physical environment conducive to children's growth and development and arrange to promote optimal program functioning.

Consider and provide for the needs of the individual child in relationship to his/her cultural and socioeconomic background, emotional or physical handicaps, and individual style and pace of learning.

Respect the dignity and basic rights of each child.

Help children learn to adapt to, and cope with, real-life situations; to develop appropriate habits in such activities as eating, dressing, napping, and personal hygiene.

Work with, and refer to the program director, children with unmet special needs, as well as families with problems that affect the child in the center.

Make daily observations of the health of children, reporting conditions that require attention; administer first aid treatment.

Hold regular parent-teacher conferences and seek to involve parents in the child development program by participating in parent meetings and demonstrating an interest in the child which extends beyond the classroom.

Maintain progress records on the emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development of assigned children.

Supervise and encourage the development of assistant teachers, aides, volunteers, and other child care personnel in the classroom.

Participate in staff meetings, training sessions, conferences, workshops, and other career development and professional activities.

Ensure that equipment and materials are accessible, appropriate, and in good condition.

Perform classroom-related maintenance duties.

Participate in staff meetings and in-service training.

Cooperate with program director in evaluation of assistants.

Perform related duties as assigned.

Supervision

The child care teacher shall receive supervision from the program director.

Assistant Child Care Teacher

The assistant child care teacher assists the child care teacher in the classroom and carries out a daily program in prescribed areas designed to meet the physical and developmental needs of a group of children.

Job Responsibilities

Assist the teacher in the classroom as directed.

Provide care and protection for assigned children.

Supervise the children's play activities by: participating with children in group games; enforcing safety rules; encouraging children to develop positive social relationships with each other, with classroom staff, and with visitors.

Work with staff to develop each individual child's potential. Bring to the attention of the teacher special problems in adjustment, learning, social interaction, or physical functioning of individual children.

Respect the dignity and basic rights of children.

Aid children in eating, dressing, and other activities to foster appropriate habits.

Maintain assigned progress records on the emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development of children.

Participate in staff meetings, training sessions, conferences, and workshops.

Attend and participate in parent group meetings.

Arrange the environment and prepare supplies for activities. Ensure that equipment and supplies are accessible and in good condition.

Act as rider when children are transported.

Make daily observations of the health of children, reporting conditions that require attention; administer first aid treatment.

Perform related duties as assigned.

Supervision

The assistant child care teacher is supervised by the child care teacher.

Family Day Care Provider

The duties and responsibilities of the family day care provider are much the same as those of a child care teacher working in a center plus the relevant duties of the center administrator and program director.

Self Check 2.2. True/False

___ 1. It is the caregiver's responsibility to help children feel comfortable and happy.

___ 2. It is the caregiver's responsibility to strengthen children's self-confidence.

___ 3. It is the caregiver's responsibility to provide experiences that help children grow and develop.

___ 4. One of caregivers' roles is to design and organize a stimulating learning environment for children.

___ 5. One of the caregiver's roles is to facilitate children's play.

___ 6. Early childhood facility administrators are responsible for meeting their state's licensing rules and regulations.

___ 7. In the typical early childhood facility, the Administrator is supervised by the Program Director.

___ 8. The job responsibilities of Program Director in the typical early childhood facility include assisting staff members' professional development.

___ 9. The job responsibilities of an Assistant Child Care Teacher in the typical early childhood facility include planning daily learning experiences for the children.

___10. The job responsibilities of a Child Care Teacher in the typical early childhood facility include

holding regular parent-teacher conferences.

___11. The job responsibilities of an Assistant Child Care Teacher in the typical early childhood facility include supervising children's play activities.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. F, 10. T, 11. T)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 7 and 9 of Self Check 2.2 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

7. The program Administrator will report to the Board of Directors.

9. The Assistant Child Care Teacher in a typical early childhood facility will assist the Teacher in the classroom as directed.

* * *

Ethical Standards for Child Care Providers

To further their mission of serving and acting on behalf of the needs, rights, and well-being of all young children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has prepared a Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment: Guidelines for Responsible Behavior in Early Childhood Education. This Code was initially approved by NAEYC's Governing Board in 1989 and revised in 1992, 1997, and 2005. The 2005 revised Code of Ethical Conduct is printed in this course with the permission of the NAEYC.

The Preamble of the Code of Ethical Conduct sets forth the Code's purpose and focus. This is followed by a statement of the core values and conceptual framework upon which the Code is based.

The Code of Ethical Conduct is divided into four sections:

I. Ethical responsibilities to children

II. Ethical responsibilities to families

III. Ethical responsibilities to colleagues

IV. Ethical responsibilities to community and society

Each of these four sections contains both ideals and principles.

As you read the Code of Ethical Conduct, give particular attention to its standards regarding *confidentiality, trust,* and *responsibility.*

The Code of Ethical Conduct concludes with a Statement of Commitment. This is a commitment that every early childhood professional should make.

Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment

Revised April 2005
Reaffirmed and Updated May 2011

Preamble

NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications. The **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct** offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The **Statement of Commitment** is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgment of an individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.

The primary focus is on daily practice with children and their families in programs for children from birth through 8 years of age, such as infant/toddler programs, preschool and prekindergarten programs, child care centers, hospital and child life settings, family child care homes, kindergartens, and primary classrooms. When the issues involve young children, then these provisions also apply to specialists who do not work directly with children, including program administrators, parent educators, early childhood adult educators, and officials with responsibility for program monitoring and licensing.

Core Values

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture,* community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

Conceptual Framework

The Code sets forth a framework of professional responsibilities in four sections. Each section addresses an area of professional relationships: (1) with children, (2) with families, (3) with colleagues, and (4) with the community and society. Each section includes an introduction to the primary

*The term *culture* includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationship to the world.

responsibilities of the early childhood practitioner in that context. The introduction is followed by a set of ideals (I) that reflect exemplary professional practice and by a set of principles (P) describing practices that are required, prohibited, or permitted.

The ideals reflect the aspirations of practitioners. **The principles** guide conduct and assist practitioners in resolving ethical dilemmas.* Both ideals and principles are intended to direct practitioners to those questions which, when responsibly answered, can provide for conscientious decisionmaking. While the Code provides specific direction for addressing some ethical dilemmas, many others will require the practitioner to combine the guidance of the Code with sound professional judgment.

The ideals and principles in this Code present a shared framework of professional responsibility that affirms our commitment to the core values of our field. The Code publicly acknowledges the responsibilities that we in the field have assumed and in so doing supports ethical behavior in our work. Practitioners who face ethical dilemmas are urged to seek guidance in the applicable parts of this Code and in the spirit that informs the whole.

Often, "the right answer"—the best ethical course of action to take—is not obvious. There may be no readily apparent, positive way to handle a situation. When one important value contradicts another, we face an ethical dilemma. When we face a dilemma, it is our professional responsibility to consult the Code and all relevant parties to find the most ethical resolution.

Section I: Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self- awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.

Ideals

I-1.1. To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood care and education and to stay informed through continuing education and training.

I-1.2. To base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early child education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child.

I-1.3. To recognize and respect the unique qualities, abilities, and potential of each child.

I-1.4. To appreciate the vulnerability of children and their dependence on adults.

I-1.5. To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.

I-1.6. To use assessment instruments and strategies that are appropriate for the children to be assessed, that are used only for the purposes for which they were designed, and that have the potential to benefit children.

I-1.7. To use assessment information to understand and support children's development and learning, to support instruction, and to identify children who may need additional services.

I-1.8. To support the right of each child to play and learn in an inclusive environment that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities

I-1.9. To advocate for and ensure that all children, including those with special needs, have access to the support services needed to be successful.

I-1.10. To ensure that each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure are recognized and valued in the program.

I-1.11. To provide all children with experiences in a language that they know, as well as support children in maintaining the use of their home language and in learning English.

I-1.12. To work with families to provide a safe and smooth transition as children and families move from one program to the next.

Principles

P-1.1. Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. ***This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.***

P-1.2. We shall care for and educate children in positive emotional and social environments that are cognitively stimulating and that support each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure.

P-1.3. We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or excluding them from programs or activities on the basis of their sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs, medical condition, disability, or the marital status/family structure, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs or other affiliations of their families. (Aspects of this principle do not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

P-1.4. We shall involve all of those with relevant knowledge (including families and staff) in decisions concerning a child, as appropriate, ensuring confidentiality of sensitive information.

P-1.5. We shall use appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, to provide information on children's learning and development.

P-1.6. We shall strive to ensure that decisions such as those related to enrollment, retention, or assignment to special education services, will be based

*There is not necessarily a corresponding principle for each ideal.

on multiple sources of information and will never be based on a single assessment, such as a test score or a single observation.

P-1.7. We shall strive to build individual relationships with each child; make individualized adaptations in teaching strategies, learning environments, and curricula; and consult with the family so that each child benefits from the program. If after such efforts have been exhausted, the current placement does not meet a child's needs, or the child is seriously jeopardizing the ability of other children to benefit from the program, we shall collaborate with the child's family and appropriate specialists to determine the additional services needed and/or the placement option(s) most likely to ensure the child's success. (Aspects of this principle may not apply in programs that have a lawful mandate to provide services to a particular population of children.)

P-1.8. We shall be familiar with the risk factors for and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse and physical, emotional, educational, and medical neglect. We shall know and follow state laws and community procedures that protect children against abuse and neglect.

P-1.9. When we have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, we shall report it to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When appropriate, parents or guardians will be informed that the referral will be or has been made.

P-1.10. When another person tells us of his or her suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action to protect the child.

P-1.11. When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/or others who can.

Section II: Ethical Responsibilities to Families

Families* are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well-being, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child's development.

Ideals

I-2.1. To be familiar with the knowledge base related to working effectively with families and to stay informed through continuing education and training.

I-2.2. To develop relationships of mutual trust and create partnerships with families we serve.

I-2-3. To welcome all family members and encourage them to participate in the program including involvement in shared decision making.

I-2.4. To listen to families, acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and learn from families as we support them in their task of nurturing children.

I-2.5. To respect the dignity and preferences of each family and to make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families.

I-2.6. To acknowledge families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.

I-2.7. To share information about each child's education and development with families and to help them understand and appreciate the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession.

I-2.8. To help family members enhance their understanding of their children, as staff are enhancing their understanding of each child through communications with families, and support family members in the continuing development of their skills as parents.

I-2.9. To foster families' efforts to build support networks and, when needed, participate in building networks for families by providing them with opportunities to interact with program staff, other families, community resources, and professional services.

Principles

P-2.1. We shall not deny family members access to their child's classroom or program setting unless access is denied by court order or other legal restriction.

P-2.2. We shall inform families of program philosophy, curriculum, assessment system, cultural practices, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do—which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children (see Section I).

P-2.3. We shall inform families of and, when appropriate, involve them in policy decisions.

P-2.4. We shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child.

P-2.5. We shall make every effort to communicate effectively with all families in a language that they understand. We shall use community resources for translation and interpretation when we do not have sufficient resources in our own programs.

P-2.6. As families share information with us about their children and families, we shall ensure that families' input is an important contribution to the planning and implementation of the program.

P-2.7. We shall inform families about the nature and purpose of the program's child assessments and how data about their child will be used.

P-2.8. We shall treat child assessment information confidentially and share this information only when there is a legitimate need for it.

*The term *family* may include those adults, besides parents, with the responsibility of being involved in educating, nurturing, and advocating for the child.

P-2.9. We shall inform the family of injuries and incidents involving their child, of risks such as exposures to communicable diseases that may result in infection, and of occurrences that might result in emotional stress.

P-2-10. Families shall be fully informed of any proposed research projects involving their children and shall have the opportunity to give or withhold consent without penalty. We shall not permit or participate in research that could in any way hinder the education, development, or well-being of children.

P-2.11. We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness working with their children.

P-2.12. We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records. These policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

P-2.13. We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

P-2.14. In cases where family members are in conflict with one another, we shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions. We shall refrain from becoming an advocate for one party.

P-2.15. We shall be familiar with and appropriately refer families to community resources and professional support services. After a referral has been made, we shall follow up to ensure that services have been appropriately provided.

Section III. Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

In a caring, cooperative workplace, human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction is promoted, and positive relationships are developed and sustained. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain settings and relationships that support productive work and meet professional needs. The same ideals that apply to children also apply as we interact with adults in the workplace.

A. Responsibilities to co-workers

Ideals

I-3A.1. To establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, confidentiality, collaboration, and cooperation with co-workers.

I-3A.2. To share resources with co-workers, collaborating to ensure that the best possible early childhood care and education program is provided.

I-3A.3. To support co-workers in meeting their professional needs and in their professional development.

I-3A.4. To accord co-workers due recognition of professional achievement.

Principles

P-3A.1. We shall recognize the contributions of colleagues to our program and not participate in practices that diminish their reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families.

P-3A.2. When we have concerns about the professional behavior of a co-worker, we shall first let that person know of our concern in a way that shows respect for personal dignity and for the diversity to be found among staff members, and then attempt to resolve the matter collegially and in a confidential manner.

P-3A.3. We shall exercise care in expressing views regarding the personal attributes or professional conduct of co-workers. Statements should be based on firsthand knowledge, not hearsay, and relevant to the interests of children and programs.

P-3A.4. We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against a co-worker because of sex, race, national origin, religious beliefs or other affiliations, age, marital status/family structure, disability, or sexual orientation.

B. Responsibilities to employers

Ideals

I-3B.1. To assist the program in providing the highest quality of service.

I-3B.2. To do nothing that diminishes the reputation of the program in which we work unless it is violating laws and regulations designed to protect children or the provisions of this Code.

Principles

P-3B.1. We shall follow all program policies. When we do not agree with program policies, we shall attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organization.

P-3B.2. We shall speak or act on behalf of an organization only when authorized. We shall take care to acknowledge when we are speaking for the organization and when we are expressing a personal judgment.

P-3B.3. We shall not violate laws or regulations designed to protect children and shall take appropriate action consistent with this Code when aware of such violations.

P-3B.4. If we have concerns about a colleague's behavior, and children's well-being is not at risk, we may address the concern with that individual. If children are at risk or the situation does not improve after it has been brought to the colleague's attention, we shall report the colleague's uneth-

ical or incompetent behavior to an appropriate authority.

P.3B-5. When we have a concern about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of care and education within the program, we shall inform the program's administration or, when necessary, other appropriate authorities.

Section IV: Ethical Responsibilities to Community and Society

Early childhood programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's welfare. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to cooperate with agencies and professions that share the responsibility for children, to assist families in gaining access to those agencies and allied professionals, and to assist in the development of community programs that are needed but not currently available.

As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of care and education for children and to conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity. Because of our specialized expertise in early childhood development and education and because the larger society shares responsibility for the welfare and protection of young children, we acknowledge a collective obligation to advocate for the best interests of children within early childhood programs and in the larger community and to serve as a voice for young children everywhere.

The ideals and principles in this section are presented to distinguish between those that pertain to the work of the individual early childhood educator and those that more typically are engaged in collectively on behalf of the best interests of children—with the understanding that individual early childhood educators have a shared responsibility for addressing the ideals and principles that are identified as "collective."

Ideals (Individual)

I.4.1. To provide the community with high-quality early childhood care and education programs and services.

Ideals (Collective)

I-4.2. To promote cooperation among professionals and agencies and interdisciplinary collaboration among professions concerned with addressing issues in the health, education and well-being of young children, their families, and their early childhood educators.

I-4.3. To work through education, research, and advocacy toward an environmentally safe world in which all children receive health care, food, and shelter; are nurtured; and live free from violence in their home and their communities.

I-4.4. To work through education, research, and advocacy toward a society in which all young children have access to high-quality early care and education programs.

I-4.5. To work to ensure that appropriate assessment systems, which include multiple sources of information, are used for purposes that benefit children.

I-4.6. To promote knowledge and understanding of young children and their needs. To work toward greater societal acknowledgment of children's rights and greater social acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of all children.

I-4.7. To support policies and laws that promote the well-being of children and families, and to work to change those that impair their well-being. To participate in developing policies and laws that are needed, and to cooperate with families and other individuals and groups in these efforts.

I-4.8. To further the professional development of the field of early childhood care and education and to strengthen its commitment to realizing its core values as reflected in this Code.

Principles (Individual)

P-4.1. We shall communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services that we provide.

P-4.2. We shall apply for, accept, and work in positions for which we are personally well-suited and professionally qualified. We shall not offer services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.

P-4.3. We shall carefully check references and shall not hire or recommend for employment any person whose competence, qualifications, or character makes him or her unsuited for the position.

P-4.4. We shall be objective and accurate in reporting the knowledge upon which we base our program practices.

P-4.5. We shall be knowledgeable about the appropriate use of assessment strategies and instruments and interpret results accurately to families.

P-4.6. We shall be familiar with laws and regulations that serve to protect the children in our programs and be vigilant in ensuring that these laws and regulations are followed.

P-4.7. When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of children, we have an ethical responsibility to protect children or inform parents and/or others who can.

P-4.8. We shall not participate in practices which are in violation of laws and regulations that protect the children in our programs.

P-4.9. When we have evidence that an early childhood program is violating laws or regulations protecting children, we shall report the violation to appropriate authorities who can be expected to remedy the situation.

P-4.10. When a program violates or requires its employees to violate this Code, it is permissible, after fair assessment of the evidence, to disclose the identity of that program.

Principles (Collective)

P-4.11. When policies are enacted for purposes that do not benefit children, we have a collective responsibility to work to change these policies.

P-4.12. When we have evidence that an agency that provides services intended to ensure children's well-being is failing to meet its obligations, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to report the problem to appropriate authorities or to the public. We shall be vigilant in our follow-up until the situation is resolved.

P-4.13. When a child protection agency fails to provide adequate protection for abused or neglected children, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to work toward the improvement of these services.

* * *

Glossary of Terms Related to Ethics

Code of Ethics. Defines the core values of the field and provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work.

Values. Qualities or principles that individuals believe to be desirable or worthwhile and that they prize for themselves, for others, and for the world in which they live.

Core Values. Commitments held by a profession that are consciously and knowingly embraced by its practitioners because they make a contribution to society. There is a difference between personal values and the core values of a profession.

Morality. Peoples' views of what is good, right, and proper; their beliefs about their obligations; and their ideas about how they should behave.

Ethics. The study of right and wrong, or duty and obligation, that involves critical reflection on morality and the ability to make choices between values and the examination of the moral dimensions of relationships.

Professional Ethics. The moral commitments of a profession that involve moral reflection that extends and enhances the personal morality practitioners bring to their work, that concern actions of right and wrong in the workplace, and that help individuals resolve moral dilemmas they encounter in their work.

Ethical Responsibilities. Behaviors that one must or must not engage in. Ethical responsibilities are clear-cut and are spelled out in the Code of Ethical Conduct (for example, early childhood educators should never share confidential information about a child or family with a person who has no legitimate need for knowing).

Ethical Dilemma. A moral conflict that involves determining appropriate conduct when an individual faces conflicting professional values and responsibilities.

Sources for glossary terms and definitions

Feeney, S., & N. Freeman. 1999. *Ethics and the early childhood educator: Using the NAEYC code*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Kidder, R.M. 1995. *How good people make tough choices: Resolving the dilemmas of ethical living.* New York: Fireside.

Kipnis, K. 1987. How to discuss professional ethics. *Young Children* 42 (4): 26–30.

Statement of Commitment*

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

- Never harm children.
- Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

*This Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgment of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming part of the profession.

Self Check 2.3. True/False

___ 1. A core value for early childhood professionals is to appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle.

___ 2. Child care workers should base their work on knowledge of child development.

___ 3. Child care workers should recognize and respect the uniqueness of each child.

___ 4. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct stresses that decisions of professional child care workers should overrule parents' decisions about their children.

___ 5. Child care workers should support the right of all children to play and learn in the most inclusive environment possible.

___ 6. Child care workers should develop relationships of mutual trust with the families they serve.

___ 7. Child care workers have a responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authority in their area.

___ 8. Child care workers must protect the confidentiality of children's records.

___ 9. Child care workers must respect families' right to privacy.

___10. Child care workers must respect the dignity of each family and its culture, language, customs, and beliefs.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. F, 5. T, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T)

Correct Answer for False Self Check Item

Item 4 of Self Check 2.3 is false. Please review the following correct statement.

4. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct states that child care workers shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child.

* * *

In his article "Professionalism: The Missing Ingredient for Excellence in the Workplace," which follows, Parker Anderson notes four hallmarks of professionalism and then explains several additional ingredients that foster professionalism. As you read this article, examine your own level of professionalism. What actions might you take to increase your level of professionalism? What benefits do you feel might follow?

* * *

Professionalism: The Missing Ingredient for Excellence in the Workplace

by M. Parker Anderson

...As defined by Webster's, professionalism is the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. ...

When professionalism is at work it makes a tremendous difference in how you feel, or how you might act or react to any given situation. You can immediately feel taken care of when working or interacting with a professional. A feeling of trust and confidence is conveyed through professional interactions. Professionalism has this magical way of extending, beyond just an immediate favorable return, to create long-lasting positive feelings toward other staff members, to the organization at large, the work environment, and even to the services provided by the organization. Professionalism invites a bonding that helps cement relationships among peers and clients alike. The impact of professionalism is truly significant, and the effects can be highly beneficial and long-lasting.

Serving up professionalism

Professionalism reflects an individual's desire to meet, at the very least, the minimum expectations of excellence within his/her job or responsibilities. It also requires that the individual be willing to go slightly above and beyond that minimum. Professionalism requires stepping up to do what it takes to be of service and to meet and at times exceed the demands of the duties outlined for the job. Professionalism requires knowing your job so well that as an individual, without waiting to be told or directed, greater levels of responsibility can be taken on in order to be responsive to the needs of colleagues or clients being served.

What a joy it is to encounter a professional who exudes professionalism. It often can feel like a long lost friend that comes back into our life and rekindles a sense of warmth and appreciation. Similar to an old family recipe that secretly hides its essential delicate spice, professionalism can be the hidden ingredient that separates an efficient or effective office [or center] from one that is superior. In an efficient office [or center], professionalism can occur on a sometimes basis, as though it were floating through to see where it can land or even when it could be invited in to stay for awhile. Whereas in the superior office [or center] setting, professionalism is noted at all levels, thus having a tremendous impact on the entire office [or center] environment. At times, professionalism can appear as missing in many offices, programs, or day to day workplace interactions; however, when it is present, it makes such a difference. What I love about professionalism is that, like a sweet aroma or flavorful ingredient, it sends a gentle waft of excellence throughout the workplace.

Professionalism is more than just the way you speak, act, or comport yourself. It is something you strive for and seek to achieve. Professionalism also requires being grounded and skilled in your area of expertise. Those seeking professionalism must be on a constant search for opportunities that will provide additional mastery, growth, and challenges. I remember teachers using their summer vacations to travel, to take courses, to participate in exchange programs, all so they could bring back their experiences and new learning into their classrooms in the fall, replenishing their professional skills and abilities. Now, so many teachers have to work and study year round that it leaves

them so little time to regenerate and/or fill their cup with reflection. So professionalism appears also linked to balance, stability, and a deliberate steady pace of personal reflection. In the old days people actually seemed to stop and think more about what professionalism meant and what it should and could be. Nowadays, we hardly seem to have time to think about professionalism or manage the energy to serve it up to others on a golden platter.

Capturing the elusive

Professionalism is truly something that has to be thought about and worked on; it requires a constant, ongoing commitment to achieve.

Each of us can be reminded about being professional regardless of our age or our years on the job. Professionalism is more than something you get anointed with and have forever. Professionalism requires from each of us a focused attention. Each and every day, and, actually in each interaction, we can move toward a new and higher level of professionalism. Whether the conversation is with doctors or teachers or directors or hair dressers, there appears to be a consensus that professionalism is something we can each strive to achieve and accomplish more. On some occasions, professionalism is present through a person's voice, their gentle words, or through their very commanding performance in action. In other instances, professionalism is seen as immediately missing in their overall attitude or willingness to be of service. This can occur so quickly—by the receptionist who tells the parent to wait because she needs to finish a personal phone call or the supervisor who may want to berate an employee in front of others.

There is not a particular requirement or way of being exhibiting professionalism. In many ways it tends to be quite elusive. There is not one style of dress, attitude, or type of disposition that takes precedence over and above another for professionalism to be present, and yet when speaking with people from across the country, there is a general consensus about professionalism.

We can expect professionalism in our interactions and with our peers; however, professionalism is not something you can demand. In the very act of demanding it, professionalism seems to disappear. This particularly struck me because I often hear supervisors and leaders demanding professionalism from their staff. It appears that expecting professionalism helps it to manifest while demanding it appears to make it as invisible as a stealth bomber. Now we see it and now we don't.

The hallmarks of professionalism

Although there are many different factors that contribute to professionalism, four key hallmarks will be addressed below:

- Dress and attire,
- Attitude and disposition,
- Knowledge and skills, and
- Personal responsibility.

It should be made clear from the outset that none of these by themselves provide what it takes for professionalism to be present, but they are listed here as some of the areas that can bolster the level of professionalism. For example, dressing for success will not by itself make one's professionalism stand out, but it does move toward creating a semblance of the total package. Each of these components should be interconnected one with the other to enhance the conceptualization of professionalism. Some people may dress well but their attitude or disposition can be so unacceptable that professionalism is not considered as present. On the other hand, someone may dress well and have a very pleasant disposition linked to a deep sense of personal responsibility, and in them one can begin to see the manifestation of professionalism. These hallmarks are provided as preliminary guideposts when seeking what is required for professionalism to occur.

Dress and attire

Now, I recognize that everyone has their own personal style of dress and personal attire. Believe me, I do know that I would not like to have a designated uniform or dress standard. I like to be comfortable and relaxed, and I also like to be pulled together and fashionable. I know that when I am wearing certain things I feel more focused, or intense, or ready for the trenches of hard work. …

We can look trendy and still exhibit an air of professionalism through our attire. We can be fashionable, comfortable, and relaxed and have a professional demeanor and look that boldly speaks to our underlying professionalism. Although professionalism requires appropriate dress, it does not necessarily require the look or the outfits to be expensive. Wearing things that are too tight can be just as awkward as wearing things that are too baggy. Casual Fridays still require us to dress for work and not for the beach. Professionalism speaks to more than what you are wearing but to the understanding required, at a core level, of what to wear and what it communicates.

Attitude and disposition

Nowadays, negative attitudes are sometimes evident throughout the workplace and provide further evidence of unprofessional behavior within the work environment. Rudeness, inappropriate jokes, surly, arrogant, and snippy attitudes are just a few of the ways in which people interact with one another at work. The jokes are not funny, and the attitudes are actually mean-spirited and, more often than not, obnoxious. It just does not make you want to be around these kinds of individuals, and it surely does not increase your own level of productivity. …

A positive work attitude is so important inside the workplace and frequently provides further evidence that professionalism is present. Being courteous and pleasant are essential necessities. It is ever critical to be mindful of surly, snippy, or arrogant attitudes that many times creep into the work setting. Sometimes people are not even aware

of the effects of their disposition upon others. A leave me alone look, a constant frown, a disgusted attitude all can permeate the work environment and bring everyone down. …

Being in the position to hire staff, it was my belief that if people were open to learning they would have fun and while having fun would bring a good or great disposition to the work space. I sought to surround myself with those whose attitudes were filled with a sense of joy and were motivated by a strong sense of individual and group purpose. We all didn't have to like each other but we did need to get along. To do that we need to stop the back-biting and the malicious gossiping that is ever so hurtful. We recognized that it didn't help us to get our job done nor did it motivate us to move to honor our colleagues for their many contributions. At times it is the very individual that the group is bringing down who steps up and provides guidance and leadership at a time when it is most needed. Ahh! Now that is professionalism. When in the face of being denigrated or abused or victimized, even by members of your team, you as an individual can rise above it all and command respect by merely expecting a standard of excellence within your work community.

Knowledge and skills

Another one of the hallmarks of professionalism is having a deep-seated knowledge in your skills and ability. Regardless of what your degree or title may be, it is important to know as much as you can about your career field and your designated work. Being willing to find out and share more with others is truly evidenced inside of professionalism. There is a quest for learning as much as you can from all sorts of places and in all sorts of ways. My general contractor demonstrates his ongoing professionalism in his search to learn more about the new electrical items on the market; the classroom aide expresses an interest in learning more about reading strategies and pursues increasing her current skills in that area; the cafeteria worker wants to know what the latest study says about good nutrition for children. There is a strong desire to open a book, attend a conference, meet new people, navigate a computer program—all occur as an effort to further one's professionalism in all capacities.

One of the key elements in professionalism is not just what you know, but how willing you are to share your knowledge and information. There seems to be a recognition that knowledge is available and that it can be shared and given away. Professionalism is more often needed when sharing bad news than sharing good news. When the director keeps the staff informed of pending lay-offs or the executive communicates effectively the lack of pay raises for the year, there is truly a need for skilled professionalism. Many times it is how we navigate the bad times when our style of professionalism emerges. Examining your own personal style of learning and sharing can be extremely helpful in the assessment of your personal levels of professionalism. …

Personal responsibility

Professionalism requires the presence of personal responsibility and accountability. Personal responsibility includes meeting deadlines, honoring others for their deadlines, returning phone calls in a timely fashion, showing up on time, and following through on work related items. When personal responsibility is present, the efficiency and effectiveness that occur within an office [or center] is heightened.

Management teams need to take personal responsibility very seriously. Too many employees feel slighted and disrespected in both large and small ways by their management teams. Management teams can and should accept the personal responsibility for remedying these situations where employees feel disgruntled. The impact of ownership of their own personal levels of responsibility within the workplace can have a huge impact on office efficiency and effectiveness. It often doesn't take much to satisfy an employee and potentially gain their loyalty and admiration. Noticing when the employee no longer feels as challenged as when they first came to the job or looking for opportunities to stretch the abilities of peers and colleagues can all contribute to heightening the interests and motivations of all.

Lack of professionalism also occurs because people go into work feeling unmotivated by their work, by the people they work with, or by the day to day responsibilities they have been assigned. People can arrive into a new job excited and then somehow pick up all of the bad habits of others that permeate the workplace. They get lazy, bored, and irresponsible. This, in short, represents one of the ways that the cycle of unprofessionalism gets perpetuated. Employees notice many of the discrepancies that occur within the workplace including when leaders show favoritism to some while penalizing others for similar actions or if there seems to be a greater listening ear for some versus being more balanced with all members of the team.

Key ingredients

It often appears that professionalism is just something that happens, that some people have and others don't. This is far from the truth—professionalism is available to all. In addition to the points already discussed, several other key ingredients will foster professionalism.

Honor professionalism

Look for good models that will support and model your view and expectation of professionalism. Look for professionalism as it shows up in yourself and in others. Recognize that professionalism can occur in all sorts of people regardless of their rank, title, or position. Look for good examples, both traditional and non-traditional. Consider the janitor who arrives early day after day in the winter, to warm up the building or school. Or the colleague who knocks before just entering uninvited into your workspace. … Look for the places even in yourself, where you are willing to set an example of professional excellence, not because you have to but because you choose to. The more professionalism is honored, the more likely it will be valued in our own lives and in the lives of others in the workplace.

Strive for excellence

Striving for excellence helps to bring professionalism forward. Many times as a coach, I hear people saying that once their perfect job opportunity occurs, they will be or act in a different way. That desire to wait on perfection does not help it to appear. Now is the time to practice and rehearse as though the perfect job were already in existence. Bring your best to your work. Professionalism requires ongoing practice and a steady rehearsal in order to have it become part of your life.

Remember professionalism is not something that you get and then get to keep for a lifetime. On the contrary it is something that we need to work toward each and every day. It is possible to be professional in one instance and in the very next moment lose your composure or temperament in a way that is totally unprofessional. Practice helps to keep an appropriate emotional balance. We should strive for professional excellence because others are always looking for good, positive role models. You can be that role model.

Make allowances and practice forgiveness

As we move toward being more professional, it becomes equally important to constantly make room for growth and development in others. It is not necessary to have the last word on a topic or issue, or is there a need to be right at all cost? Make an allowance for the other person. Be open to being generous and giving even as you move toward being more professional. Invite others to try making allowances as well. This can often feel very unfamiliar to people because we often don't promote being forgiving.

Bring out strengths

Compliment, compliment, compliment should become the order of the day. We can miss so many opportunities to let others know how well they are doing or how much we appreciate their support and service. Let that person on the other end of a phone know how much you appreciated their courtesies; send a note thanking someone for their skills and abilities in taking care of you; and look for the best in what the person is doing that works and help them to know that you at least are seeing what they are doing that does work.

When you work to bring out the best in others by noticing their skills or contributions then it supports that person toward increasing their professionalism throughout the day. Commenting on someone's strengths just helps them to feel good, and that creates such a great feeling in the workplace.

Maintain integrity

Integrity is so very essential in our lives. It must be included as it is necessary for professionalism. Integrity is about our word and what our word stands for. Often integrity is one of the first things that goes missing or it gets pretty fuzzy. We don't mean for our integrity to be weakened, but it goes in little, simple, relatively harmless ways. We should notice if it is easy not to follow through on our word for ourselves. How much easier it might be to not be true to our word in writing a memo, planning a celebration party for the children as promised, or being on time for a meeting.

Too often and inside of too many circles within the workplace have I witnessed the slippery slope of integrity and truth. The question becomes, "Where is the integrity when you sign in on time when you really have arrived late?" "Where is the integrity in aggressively yelling at an employee, embarrassing them, humiliating them, only to know that if the situation were reversed you would fire them on the spot?" "Where is the professional integrity in maintaining the status-quo when supposedly each year there is a new board initiative or goals that go unmet?" …

If we really examine the issue of professionalism, we may need to confront and address some of these areas where our integrity could be restored. What would really happen if we started to be more honest with one another in and out of the workplace? What opportunities would result if we spoke our truth without it coming from a place of defending ourselves or without any intention to hurt or harm?

The missing ingredient

So whether you are the president of the company, the data clerk, the educational aide, or the early childhood consultant, there is a certain something within you that distinguishes you as a true professional. In general, we can all step up and do a little more to perform and meet our basic duties and responsibilities, including being gracious and responsive to others. Because when true professionalism is present, there is always that something extra that is evident. There is the going beyond what is called for, such as a willingness to work late on a project, having integrity, sharing a mutual feeling of respect for colleagues and others, bringing forth dignity in day-to-day interactions. Then when we hear comments such as "Now there is a professional" or "Wow, I so appreciate your professionalism" we realize that we touched and connected with another. When that happens, it is positively joyous to hear someone say that about the work that you do every day. Being recognized for your professionalism is an awesome experience and it will stay with you for a long time to come.

I invite you to examine your own level of professionalism and determine if you have that missing ingredient that allows for excellence in the workplace.

Lesson 2 Quiz

Please read Lesson 2 two times before attempting its quiz. When you have finished reading this lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at www.CareCourses.com and open your course file to access the Online Quiz for this lesson.

Lesson 3

Respecting Diversity

Learning Objectives

In Lesson 3 you will learn

- anti-bias guidelines
- ways to analyze classrooms for an anti-bias approach
- ways to show respect for family differences

* * *

Anti-Bias Guidelines

Definitions of Relevant Vocabulary

Multiculturalism is the practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, ethnicities, attitudes and opinions within an environment. Multiculturalism promotes teaching, learning, and understanding cultural, social, political, and human differences. This includes differences regarding race, gender, class, sexual identity, disability, and religious difference. Multiculturalism promotes the strength and value of cultural diversity, human rights and respect for cultural diversity.

Diversity is the inclusive representation of multiple (ideally all) groups within an environment.

Bias is any act—verbal, written, physical, or psychological—that maligns, threatens, or harms a person or group on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, or veteran status. Acts may not always be in violation of civil, criminal, or organizational codes but may warrant intervention if they cause individuals to lose confidence in their ability to participate in an organization or group.

Bias Prevention is an organized system of monitoring, intervening in, and restoring an environment in the aftermath of bias incidents. ***Monitoring*** includes the reporting of incidents when they occur. ***Intervention*** includes counseling persons victimized by bias acts as well as persons who have witnessed bias acts. Intervention also includes addressing persons who perpetrate bias acts to prevent such acts from recurring. Persons in authority and leadership usually comprise bias prevention teams.

Anti-bias Stance means adopting strategies that enable one to interrupt bias acts, for example, interrupting sexist jokes in a male locker-room, correcting stereotypes such as "Gays are child molesters," with assertiveness.

Cross-cultural communication implies interaction with persons of different cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, religious, age, class backgrounds. Cross-cultural communication is a process of exchanging, negotiating, and mediating one's cultural differences through language, nonverbal gestures, and space relationships. It is also the process by which people express their openness to an intercultural experience.

Five Ways to Analyze Classrooms for an Anti-Bias Approach

National Network for Child Care's
Peggy Riehl, M.Ed. Family Life Educator
Human Development and Family Studies
Univ. of Illinois Cooperative Extension

Increasingly, we are becoming aware of bias in our society. This may be bias based not only on culture or race, but also on social class, religion, or physical and mental abilities. One of the goals of high quality child care programs is to help children become sensitive to issues of bias and to develop anti-bias skills.

The materials and pictures in your early childhood program may not totally represent an anti-bias curriculum. But pictures do provide one way to introduce anti-bias concepts into your program. Analyze your classroom with attention to the particular children, families, and staff who are served. What is appropriate or inappropriate will be based partly on the culture and context of the people involved. Don't remove all "biased" materials, however. Children and adults need the opportunity to talk about and think through issues of bias. This will help them develop the critical thinking skills needed to identify bias. It will also help them to be sensitive to and to better understand the feelings of people who are hurt by bias. Children who are discriminated against also need the skills and knowledge of how to respond when bias happens to them. Since our world is ever changing, we all must continue to analyze our work and leisure for bias; it is a journey and a struggle. Consider the following areas as you think about anti-bias issues in relation to your work and lives.

One: Everyday and Everywhere

You may feel overwhelmed when you first begin to think about bias and anti-bias. You may suddenly begin to see bias everywhere—in the newspaper, on the television, or on the bus on your way to work. You may be saddened by the subtle, unspoken messages in children's books or games.

As you struggle with the issues and images, you may also become aware of the wonder of people around you. You may make new friends from diverse cultures. You may explore your own history or the history of those around you. You may find leaders today who are like you or very unlike you.

Although you now recognize that both bias and the possibility of anti-bias exists, you may not know just what to do.

But at least you know that something must be done. This is the most important step in your journey; you have recognized that choices matter and that you can make choices that support both you and the children and families you serve.

For children, remember that it is what you make available to them (not what is in the closet), that will affect their growth today. We don't know which day is the most important in a child's life. As a result, anti-bias concepts must be a continuous part of the curriculum rather than being presented as occasional "scheduled" activities. This doesn't mean that everything related to every issue of bias is displayed everyday. Rather, messages about bias and anti-bias are everywhere, everyday. One child may remember only the books you have, another only the music you play. Make a conscious decision to include some anti-bias concept somewhere, everyday.

Two: Mirrors to Self-Esteem

All children need positive self-esteem. Some, however, see positive messages everywhere without trying. Others never see themselves positively in the world around them. Base your selection of materials on the context of the children you serve. If positive images abound for your children, begin to think about how to bring diversity and balance into the classroom. If society's images are not very positive for your children, make your classroom a safe island in a hostile world.

Three: Windows to Diversity And Balance

All children experience diversity because our world is diverse. The key question is whether this diversity is perceived as positive or negative. Think about who the "other" is as you work toward opening windows to diversity and balance.

If your classroom is naturally diverse racially and culturally, for example, you will not have to worry about providing opportunities for interactions between diverse groups of children. You will focus instead on how to promote positive interactions between the children.

If your classroom has little diversity, build first on the differences that are there. Start with boys and girls, for example. As you help children recognize and respect the diversity of others, pay careful attention to how this "other" is generally perceived by the community you serve. The balance of diversity you bring into this classroom is what will be different, based on the context of the children who are there.

Balance, on the other hand, doesn't just mean 50/50. It means evaluating the context of the children in your classrooms and the larger society. Some children need more positive images of themselves in your classroom because such images can't be found in their community. Others need positive images of people who are different from them because the community already includes images like your children, but not of other people.

Take care not to degrade someone you think is not present. We may not know which child is adopted, or whose parent is unemployed. Listen to the children. Answer their spoken questions. Also try to answer unspoken questions about diversity that may not be so obvious. Help your children be sensitive to others, and to not be afraid for themselves.

Four: Culturally Appropriate, Historically Accurate, and Non-Stereotypical

It is impossible for all anti-bias classrooms to look the same! Each classroom serves different children with different families and different staff in different communities. Programs and families should take time to make conscious decisions about how they look and act in these actual contexts.

If your classroom or community is not diverse, or if you don't have personal experience with diversity, make sure any image of diversity you bring is accurate and non-stereotypical. Portraying Native Americans in traditional costumes tells children little about Native Americans today and can foster stereotypes. Providing accurate images may mean more work for you, but it is important because of the subtle messages that children will receive.

Be open to hearing other points of view. Reflecting on your own childhood, and on the lessons you learned, may help you imagine how a message is perceived by a child today. Families and staff must work together to sort through these issues.

Five: Critical Thinking and Activism

Child care professionals cannot protect children from the realities of life. We can, however, build the child's strengths. Children can develop skills to evaluate our world for respect and diversity. Talking about a book that is biased can help children think about why it is biased, and what they might do about it.

Caring for others and ourselves requires attention from all of us. Help the children and families in your program develop the skills needed to work toward anti-bias. Learning how to do this in the child care setting helps the future leaders and workers of our world know how to do it in their homes, work and communities.

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The images of "mirrors and windows" is based on unpublished materials from Emily Style of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Project S.E.E.D. (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity).

Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care – NNCC. Riehl, P. (1993). Five ways to analyze classrooms for an anti-bias approach. In Todd, C.M. (Ed.), "School-age connections," 2(6), pp.1–3. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service.

In the following article Alice Sterling Honig discusses stereotyping and a variety of situations in which stereotyping is observed among young children, particularly behaviors involving gender role stereotyping. Children also learn stereotypes relating to racial and ethnic groups at a very young age. *The First R*, by Deborah VanAusdale and Joe Feagin, is an excellent study of young children's awareness of and use of racial and ethnic stereotypes and should be a must-read for all early childhood teachers and caregivers.

Ms. Hoenig's article will make you more aware of behaviors based on stereotypes—both your own behaviors, those of your fellow workers, and those of children. Her useful suggestions will help you create an environment that counteracts stereotyping and fosters understanding, fairness, and acceptance.

* * *

How to Create an Environment that Counteracts Stereotyping

by Alice Sterling Honig

"Stereotyping" means having fixed, unchanging ideas about the characteristics of individuals in different groups. The ideas could be about almost anything in a person's world, for example, that "boys should never play with dolls or they will become sissies," or that "girls are too delicate to climb a tree." Gender is biologically based, but gender roles are constantly constructed, and by about age 2 or 3 children's play reveals gender differences.

A year-old baby looks up at the smiling, looming face of the stranger approaching and cries mightily, because all faces different from a parent's face seem alien and frightening. The baby's brain tries to make sense of the world by pigeonholing experiences as safe or unsafe, familiar or unfamiliar. People from some cultures are taught, for example, that the right hand is to be used for eating and the left hand for toilet functions. If they see someone from a different culture group using both hands freely for eating, they may become shocked and even revolted and disparage and shun that person. People of one particular religious persuasion may "demonize" folks who have totally different beliefs as "heathens" or "pagans" and be willing even to torture and kill those who will not convert to what they consider the "true" religion.

By stereotyping, some folks take a lazy way of knowing others rather than learning who that individual person "really" is! Persons prone to stereotype are sure that they know the characteristics of every person in a group they approve of or in a group that they are scared of or repudiate. Stereotypes shape our thoughts and expectations. Research with a baby dressed in pink and labeled a "girl" showed that adults characterized the baby as more delicate, more scared; if the baby was dressed in blue and labeled a boy, then adults used words to suggest the baby was bolder, and more interested in a toy football.

Stereotypes start early! They include ideas children have learned from families, television, and communities about what are "appropriate" and what are "expected" behaviors for persons who differ in culture, ethnicity, religion, dress, speech patterns, and gender.

Some teachers also promote stereotypes. Researchers note that teachers are more uncomfortable about preschool boys choosing to play with "girl" toys than they are with girls choosing "boy" toys. Seeing a preschooler approach the dress-up corner and take up a pocketbook with a handle, a caregiver called out, "That is for little girls, honey!" Teachers also give more attention to boy toddlers, who often express more neediness and "rowdiness" (8; 2).

Early in life, stereotyping becomes a "convenient" way for small children to make sense of the world. Indeed, Maccoby and colleagues suggest that the rigid sex-role stereotyping that characterizes the same-sex playgroups of preschool boys and girls arises, as young children try to understand their world and determine who and what fits into a cognitive category.

> *The four-year-old girls came to complain to Ms. Genia that the boys were hogging the block corner, and they did not have a chance to play with blocks. At circle time, the teacher talked with the children about taking turns and how the girls wanted a chance to build with blocks, too. The boys assured her that girls do not like blocks! When she explained that they really did want to play and had come to her to complain about not having time in the block corner, the boys seemed genuinely puzzled and surprised. Then they brightened up and decided, "OK. The girls can play with the blocks when we have outside playground time!" This solution, alas, did not resolve the girls' grievances.*

Stereotyped gender role thinking about the appropriateness of certain toys is strongly visible beginning in preschool. The stereotyping of sex roles is sometimes aided by the boisterousness of boys' play as some little girls see it. "I am not inviting any boys to my five year old birthday party!" announced the child of a sociologist famous for sensitivity in cross-cultural research. "Boys play too rough!" she added. The father confided to me that he had always been so fair about beliefs, customs, and patterns of interactions of the peoples he studied. He was uncomfortable with his daughter's decision, but could not "force" her to invite boys. Examination of sex role differences across many studies shows that indeed boys, as a group, have higher activity and aggression levels than girls. But the rigidity of stereotyped play behaviors and name calling in some preschool environments challenges us to become more thoughtful in creating classroom atmospheres that promote more flexible thinking and interacting.

Since categorizations begin very early as a cognitive "short-hand" convenient way of thinking early in life, how can teachers and parents assist young children in changing their rigid concepts about groups of people, whether of different ethnicity, gender, or for example, those with special needs? In *Berenstain Bears, No Girls Allowed,* the boy cubs do not want Sister Bear around. She always beats them at baseball and other "boy" type games. The older boy cubs are upset because she boasts about being better, and they try to exclude her from their club. Should Papa Bear "force" the boy cubs to let her in their club? Although she is hopping mad, Sister Bear learns how important it is to be a good winner. This book shows a good win-win manner to resolve this problem.

Becoming aware of our own stereotypes

Becoming aware of our own adult stereotypes is a first step in understanding how strong other people's stereotypes may be. Research shows that teachers interrupt preschool girls more than boys. Teachers have been found to praise little girls far more than boys for good looks. One study showed that children at a summer camp ridiculed and rejected a fat child even more than they acted mean toward children with any other bodily condition, such as hearing loss or lack of mobility.

Some adults also unconsciously behave in more negative ways toward others who look too fat or too short. Sometimes a caregiver may be more impatient with a child dressed more ragged than other children or one who speaks with a *"funny"* drawl. Interviews in high schools reveal widespread use of cruel jibes and bullying when a peer is timid, physically weak, pimply, or *"too"* smart. Youths described their anguish, despair, and belief that teachers do not notice bullying and harassment of those ostracized as "different" (3).

So our first line of defense to help create a classroom climate of acceptance for all the children is to think deeply about our own stereotypes and to keep our eyes open! Do we assume that a child who slurs speech or still wets his pants in preschool comes from a "bad" family in some way or "must" be a slower learner than other children? Do we give a lot more attention (although often negative!) to boys than to girls in the classroom, as many researchers show? As we increase our own awareness, we can become more attuned to unkind categorizations occurring in the classroom and can plan out helpful actions.

Some parents may simply be overwhelmed by daily tasks and not notice needs that teachers see clearly. A Head Start teacher working in a state with a warm climate told me quietly about a boy whom the children would not sit near because he *"smelled"* so bad. The rejection and isolation so saddened the little boy. A home visit revealed that mom was single and alcoholic. She did not have the strength to address this problem. The teacher bought a bar of soap for the boy and taught him how to wash and clean his clothes.

A teacher needs to be clear when a classroom problem of aversion or bullying is due to a personal difficulty or to stereotyping. It may take some sleuthing to figure out what is actually going on in the classroom. Observation is a teacher's first tool in gaining insights and information about social difficulties any children are having in the classroom. Many social interactions that are negative, for example, may be due to cultural differences or to interpersonal patterns of relating learned in the first years of life.

Work valiantly to lessen the power of stereotyped cultural beliefs and taboos

Some culture groups stigmatize women strongly. A child care director called me with a problem. A child from a culture where males dominate very strongly was attending the University preschool. He hit little girls in the preschool class whenever he wanted a toy or felt contradicted. The teachers explained firmly and kindly that little girls and boys have equal rights in the class. He could not hit a girl, despite the cultural norm he had learned earlier. When cultural stereotypes are powerful yet inimical to fairness, a teacher needs to reaffirm gently and enforce firmly the idea that all persons deserve to be treated fairly and kindly, whether the person is male or female.

The importance of attachment history

Bowlby and Ainsworth's pioneer work on Attachment Theory has resulted in dozens of studies that confirm how important secure attachment is for creating harmonious, cooperative relationships in the preschool classroom. Children who are insecurely attached to their primary caregivers in the first year of life often end up either as "bullies" or as "victims" in preschool (7). If caregivers want to create less stereotyping of some kids as "bad" and others as "good" in classrooms, the challenge may well be to create loving, warm, nurturing relationships with all the children. Once these intimate bonds have been developed, the child labeled as "bad" by peers can use a newly developing secure attachment to the teacher to behave in more cooperative ways that lessen the chances for stigmatization. The teacher will also work creatively with the whole class to lessen the stereotype that peers have conjured. Creating nurturing, intimate interactions that lure little ones into secure attachments is a technique to decrease stereotyping of certain children as the "bad kids" in the classroom (5).

Modeling

How we talk about others impacts young children. We need to find the positives (and note them out loud) about every child in the classroom. Using the technique of the "Kindness Jar" is one way. Talk out loud each day as you note a kindly, thoughtful, or empathic response; hurry to write it down on a piece of paper and add that paper to others in your "Kindness Jar." The kids catch on quickly!

Integrated classrooms

Children who experience many different kinds of playmates in their nursery environment will find differences in accent, ethnicity, skin color, clothing, etc. much less important than the wonderful experience of having play partners they enjoy. An integrated classroom, where teachers have enough support staff to help children with special needs, provides a natural milieu for youngsters to become comfortable with a variety of others (6).

Bibliotherapy

Storybooks can assist a teacher in promoting peer acceptance rather than stereotyping and rejection of *"different"* others. The book *Nick Joins In* tells the story of a wheelchair-bound child who saves the day in the gym when the ball gets stuck on some ceiling bars. He quickly wheels his chair to where the janitor keeps the long pole for opening high gym windows. With the pole, the children are able to get down the ball and the play goes on, thanks to Nick.

In the story *Crow Boy,* a poor farmer's child walks miles to the Japanese village school, where the other children ostracize him for his "different" ways. When the teacher learns that the boy has the special ability to use a bird call to call down crows from the sky, the teacher realizes that he, too, misjudged this child and is then able to get the other children to admire the boy's special skill.

Some picture books incite more compassion for those who are ridiculed for being different. Dr. Seuss's books featuring Horton the Elephant are admirable examples. In the book *Otto's Trunk*, an elephant with a trunk much smaller than the other preschooler elephants is jeered at and called "little squirt." Their scorn turns to admiration when Otto discovers a talent of his own—he can snort in different ways to create a menagerie.

The high-spirited badger in *Best Friends for Frances* is grumpy that Albert and Harold, who are playing ball, say that "she is not much good" at baseball and "besides this is a no-girls game." Frances realizes that earlier in the day she had snubbed her little sister Gloria in much the same way, saying that she was "not much good" with a ball. So Frances goes home and offers to play as an accepting and helpful older sister with little Gloria. Next day, both sisters go off on a picnic. They carry a sign that says: "Best friends outing. NO BOYS." When Albert sees the sign AND the lusciously filled picnic hamper, he begins to realize there surely is a down side to excluding girls from games! Little sister Gloria urges Frances to accept him (if he promises to catch a snake for her at the pond!). Once Albert promises that there will no longer be "no-girls" baseball games, Frances crosses off the words "NO BOYS" on her sign. Off the friends go to have a splendid adventurous afternoon on the hill by the pond. And Albert does catch a snake for Gloria! Reading picture books that increase empathy and decrease ostracizing others will increase class sensitivity to and acceptance of differences as a natural part of our wondrous human family.

Reinforce children's interest in a variety of toys and activities

Teachers who encourage little girls who assert that they want to grow up to become doctors or soccer players are helping to decrease the stereotype that little girls mostly want to be ballerinas. Teachers can become participants in activities where both boys and girls share a variety of roles. Rather than passively standing by and watching while boys play "fire chief" and girls dress up as "brides," teachers need actively to enter into the spirit of a pretend game. Personally involve both boys and girls to don the yellow dress-up clothes of fire fighters so that all the kids can "help put out a fire" and "save the kids in the burning house." Teachers can create group games that involve lots of activity (that preschool boys often do prefer) that require group helpfulness to keep the game going. Holding on the fringes of a parachute and running in a great circle, and then running inward to collapse the parachute and then out again to re-create the billowing circle, is one such game.

On the playground, it is helpful to have a large group swing. There, several children, boys and girls, need to pump energetically to keep the swing in motion as they all hang on firmly and work together as a "team" to keep the swing in motion. These cooperative activities are another way to ensure that the children will not always be playing in sex-stereotyped ways, but can cooperate in games together. A three-legged race, where two children side by side have their inner legs in one burlap sack, is a good game to pair a boy and girl together. The game becomes even more exciting, and cooperative, when each partner must help steady a large spoon with an egg on it while they hobble along as fast as they can in the race of three-legged partners. When teachers take preschoolers on a trip to a park or wooded area, then boys and girls together can search for leaves of different trees, catch grasshoppers gently, and try to spy frogs in a pond. On a trip to a supermarket, all the children can chime in to decide which peppers have the smoothest skin and which apples the teacher should buy so that they can make applesauce together back at their center.

Cooking is another activity, where a boy or girl can be "chef" and help the team get ingredients together and make cookies or shred lettuce leaves for a salad or prepare peanut butter sandwiches for snack time for all. Caregivers can ask children at circle time what they want to be when they grow up, and then offer encouraging affirmation when children mention non-stereotypic vocations.

Visit old age homes

Some children think of older women as "witches" and stereotype all older folks as incompetent and scary. A program that builds in regular visits to old age homes can help decrease this stereotype. Planning helps. When the children draw pictures, make collages, learn a group song to sing for the el-

Am I Creating an Anti-Bias Environment?

To gain a sense of whether you're creating an anti-bias environment in your program, score yourself on this checklist. Rather than relying on memory, have this checklist with you in the classroom.

If your answer to an item is "a lot," give yourself 2 points.

If your answer is "a little," give yourself 1 point.

If your answer is "no," give yourself 0 points.

Do I Use Materials and Do Activities That Teach About:

- All the children, families, and staff in my program?
- Contemporary children and adults from the major racial/ethnic groups in my community, my state, and American society in their families, at work, and at play?
- Diversity within each racial/ethnic group?
- Women and men of various ethnic backgrounds doing "jobs in the home?"
- Women and men of various ethnic backgrounds doing "jobs outside the home" including blue collar work, pink collar work, white collar work, and artistic work?
- Elderly people of various backgrounds doing a variety of activities?
- Differently-abled people of various backgrounds working, being with their families and playing?
- Diversity in family lifestyles, including single mom or dad; mom works, dad's at home; dad works, mom's at home; mom and dad work; two moms or two dads; extended families; interracial and multiethnic families; foster families; families by adoption; families with differently-abled members; low-income families; middle-class families?
- Individuals of many different backgrounds who contribute to our lives, including participants in movements for justice?

Now total your points and examine the results

If your score is between 16 and 18, you are using an anti-bias approach.

If you score is between 11 and 15, you are moving away from a tourist approach in some areas.

If you score is between 5 and 10, you are using a tourist approach.

If your score is 4 or below, you are using a dominant (Euro-American) culture-centered approach.

derly, the smiles and appreciation they receive will help decrease stereotypes about "scary old people."

Cross-age tutoring

Sometimes children show intolerance of children who are slower or younger or still in diapers in a preschool classroom. Set up buddy systems that involve children working together or teaching each other something one knows but the other child does not. Working together often creates a familiar comfortable feeling, and the child who stereotyped another as a "baby" for still sucking a thumb, for example, may forget the pejorative feeling while working together on a group project, such as drawing a wall mural with a sea theme that includes fishes, boats, swimmers, whales, and big waves.

Use videos to decrease stereotypes

Many television programs reinforce sex-role and other stereotypes. Videos shown to preschoolers should be chosen carefully to counteract stereotyping! For example, "Finding Nemo" shows a father fish in a nurturing, caring role with his son, rather than as a macho male figure. If you tape television shows, select shows such as "Dragon Tales" which evenly treat the girl and boy protagonists as competent and friendly, rather than showing a predominant male figure.

Invite moral mentors as visitors to the classroom

Invite people from different walks of society and different ethnic groups to visit the classroom. They may dress in different clothes from their own country and explain different customs, such as a piñata at parties. They may play an instrument, such as a samisen, that the children have never seen. Although children may at first seem wary of folks who look different from themselves, their fascination with the visitor's stories, songs, and special offerings can dispel stereotypes the children may have had about another culture group.

Invite helpers, such as folks who fight fires or deliver mail. Children are very curious about jobs. An older teen who coaches handicapped kids in swimming would make a great moral mentor to invite to the classroom. Try to invite persons who defy ordinary stereotypes. Some preschoolers believe that only men can be doctors and only women can be nurses. Invite a female doctor and a male nurse to come talk about their jobs in the classroom.

Talk with the children about the difference between actions that are "*morally"* not okay such as deliberately hurting another person, or things that are socially not approved of, such as wearing socks on top of the head! Research shows that children whose parents hold more rigid views in confounding moral and social "rightness" show more stereotyping.

Lure children to use a variety of toys

Arrange toys so that boys and girls find them attractive. Cheerfully and creatively engage groups in play with the toys despite the children's stereotypic belief that certain toys are only for boys or only for girls. During ongoing housekeeping play use ingenuity to suggest roles and responsibilities that cut across gender stereotypes (4).

Talk with parents

During parent meetings, teachers will want to clarify the goal of having a classroom that accepts many different kinds of persons and abilities. Some parents may believe that it is "shameful" for a boy to wash dishes or clean up. Stay calm and gentle in describing the ways in which your classroom is trying to promote acceptance of others and acceptance of the many rich roles we can all play to make life happier and more peaceful with each other. Be sure to ask parents to share with you times they have observed their child being kind and playing well with children from different groups and express your admiration of parents' values. Share your insights and techniques that have helped the children in your group to become more accepting and able to treat with respect and care peers who are different from them.

Although research shows that young boys do prefer more rough and tumble games and games with high activity level, and are often less verbal than little girls, teachers can use ingenuity to create many opportunities for enjoyable group games and imaginative pretend scenarios where the skills and active participation of both boys and girls enrich play for all. Sex role stereotyping is much less likely when children have had a good time playing together, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or typicality.

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The following information was adapted by the Wisconsin Curriculum Development Team from "Meeting the Challenge of Diversity" by Elizabeth Jones and Louise Derman-Sparks, *Young Children,* January 1992.

Can Any of These Inappropriate Approaches Be Found in Your Center?

1. Teachers believe they are not prejudiced.

We may not hold bigoted beliefs, but we all learn prejudices beginning in our childhood. Often, we are not aware that our belief is offensive to someone. Have you ever said, "You are running around like wild Indians?" This helps perpetuate the belief that Indians are wild. This is the idea that the children will get from the statement.

2. Teachers are proud of being "colorblind."

Generally, the idea that "we are all the same" becomes equated with "we are all white." Being "colorblind" ignores what we know about children's development of identity and attitudes. Being "colorblind" also ignores the realities of racism in the daily lives of people of color.

3. Teachers believe that white children are unaffected by diversity issues.

All of the children in your class may be white. However, children are exposed to the biases still pervasive in our country, biases based on gender, age and disability as well as race, language, and culture. Curriculum that does nothing to counter the biases of dominant culture that children absorb as they go about their daily lives ill-equips them to live effectively and fairly with diversity.

4. Teachers assume that the children they teach are "culturally deprived."

Teachers who believe that children from a culture different from their own are "deprived" believe that they need experiences that fill the void left by inadequate or inferior parenting; therefore, sharing different families' lifestyles, language, and values is not part of the curriculum. Children's behaviors, including language, that reflect their home culture are stopped and corrected. Where children are defined as culturally deprived, curriculum is often developmentally inappropriate. Learning through play and spontaneous language is seen as an unaffordable luxury for children who must work hard to "catch up."

5. Teachers seek out resources to develop multicultural curriculum.

Many teachers are making conscientious efforts to introduce multicultural activities into their classroom. Their intent is positive: Let's teach children about each other's cultures so they will learn to respect each other and not develop prejudice. In practice, however, activities frequently deteriorate into a tourist approach to diversity: "visiting other cultures" from time to time by way of a special bulletin board, a "multicultural" center, an occasional parent visit or holiday celebration or even a week's unit—and then a return to "regular" daily activities that reflect only the dominant culture. Tourist curriculum emphasized the "exotic" differences between cultures by focusing on holidays and ignoring the real-life daily problems and experience of different peoples. When activities about diversity are only occasionally added to the curriculum, rather than integrated on a daily basis, such limited exposure misrepresents cultural realities and perpetuates stereotyping.

How Can You Make Changes?

Teachers who begin to question their previous perceptions and behaviors face several potential obstacles when they consider implementing an anti-bias approach. Issues of bias stir up painful feelings, threatening both self-esteem and existing relationship patterns. Teachers may have feelings such as these:

1. "It sounds like everything I've been doing is wrong."

Challenged to examine our biases, many of us become defensive, especially if we have always seen ourselves as unbiased and fair to everyone. It is important to construct new ways of thinking and doing. Colleagues need to nurture each other through this process, just as they do children. It's OK to not be perfect, to be a learner.

2. "But what if I say the wrong thing?"

Practicing new behaviors, we may indeed say the "wrong thing." It is hard to know what to say in the face of bias; we don't have many models. It is hard to broaden the cultural base of our curriculum when what we know and love best are the stories and songs and customs of our own culture. If we try introducing new ideas, we'll be learning with the children instead of teaching them.

3. "I want my classroom to be a happy place."

Many women have been socialized to be nice, to be nurturing and to keep relationships running smoothly. We are very comfortable reminding children that we're all friends here and helping them solve problems peacefully. We are comfortable with a multicultural curriculum that emphasizes the attractive differences among celebrations, food, and music. We are not at all comfortable with an anti-bias curriculum that asks us to examine negative attitudes toward differences, including our own. We have no wish to make waves or take risks. If confronted by colleagues or supervisors, we are likely to feel both pain and anger at the threat this poses to pleasant, cooperative relationships among staff and with parents.

4. "I'm ready to address anti-bias issues with children, but I worry about my relationships with other staff, parents, and administration if I do. What will they say about me?"

A teacher who is the only adult in a classroom may have some privacy to try new curriculum and new dialogues. If she is a member of a team, negotiation becomes necessary. And what about parents? How will they react if familiar holidays aren't observed, if race and disability are talked about openly, if boys are encouraged to play with "girls' things"? Unlike young children, who are willing to explore differences and to think critically about bias, many adults have learned that these are things we don't talk about. Implementation of anti-bias curriculum sometimes produces conflict situations. Teachers skilled in conflict resolution are aware of the ingredients necessary to make it work:

- A caring relationship with the children.
- Practice in using problem-solving strategies that empower all the parties to the conflict and enable them to generate creative solutions.
- The ability to accept strong feelings, appropriately expressed.

Working in this way with young children provides an excellent base for undertaking encounters with other adults around issues likely to generate conflict. It is important that adults have established caring relationships with each other that provide the base of safety from which it is possible to challenge each other.

5. "I'd like to develop anti-bias curriculum, but I don't have the materials I'd need."

There are more materials than you might think. Some materials can be improvised. Families can be invited to share others. Stories can be collected from parents, children, colleagues, and your own imagination.

How Do You Find Support for Making Changes?

1. Buddy up with a sympathetic colleague or two in your school or community.

Talk about changes you'd like to create in your classroom. Share your fears of potential obstacles. Commit to working together and help each other get started. Observe each other's classrooms to come up with ideas for change.

2. Begin step by step in your own classroom.

Get ideas from reading and from workshops. Identify one thing you want to change—in the environment, in the children's behavior, or in your behavior. Decide whether you want to address all the areas of bias or just one and whether you want to begin with the easiest for you (for some people that is gender equity). Maybe you want to tackle the biggest challenge first.

Create Your Own Multicultural Profile

Complete the Multicultural Profile printed on the following page. Review this profile to see how much diversity has existed in your life in the past and how much diversity is in your life today.

How has the presence (or absence) of diversity affected your life? How do you think it affects the way you teach and interact with children?

Self Check 3.1. True/False

___ 1. Bias refers to any act that harms a person or group based on characteristics such as race, color, sex, religion, or disability.

___ 2. Anti-bias stance means using strategies to interrupt bias acts.

___ 3. Bias exists in all areas of our society.

___ 4. Peggy Riehl writes that the most important step in an anti-bias journey is realizing that something must be done to stop bias.

___ 5. Children need to see positive images of people who look like them as well as of people who are different from them displayed in the classroom.

___ 6. Portraying Native Americans in their traditional costumes or telling children that they are "running around like wild Indians" fosters stereotypes of this group.

___ 7. Talking with children about a book or image that is biased can help them develop skills to work toward anti-bias.

___ 8. Everyone learns prejudices of some kind beginning in their childhood.

___ 9. Being "colorblind" ignores the realities of people's individuality as well as the realities of racism.

___10. White children are generally unaffected by diversity issues.

___11. Where children are viewed as culturally deprived the curriculum is often developmentally inappropriate.

___12. It is OK for teachers to learn along with the children when implementing an anti-bias program.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. F, 11. T, 12. T)

Correct Answer for False Self Check Item

10. All children are exposed to the biases still pervasive in our country, biases based on gender, age, and disability as well as race, language, and culture.

Respecting Family Differences

The teacher must be sensitive to and respectful of differences in families' customs, lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviors. At the same time, the teacher must be careful not to stereotype families, that is, not to expect all people of a particular ethnic background to share the same customs, lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviors. There are cultural and individual differences between people of different ethnic backgrounds, and there are also cultural and individual differences among people of any one ethnic background.

Children and parents are individuals, not just members of groups. Although people tend to share beliefs and values with others of their ethnic background, every family is unique.

Teachers should learn from each family their views and customs regarding issues that affect their child. In addition to learning about each family's general childrearing views and practices, which includes the procedures that parents use to reinforce acceptable behavior or correct unacceptable behavior, it is important for teachers to learn the family's views regarding a variety of other interpersonal interaction issues. Some examples of areas in which family culture differs include:

- Is conformity or individuality encouraged?
- What level of responsibility is the child expected to assume at home?
- Does the family tend to value cooperation and family harmony more than material possessions?
- Are children generally indulged and granted early gratification or are they encouraged to postpone immediate gratification in favor of a more long-term reward?
- Is eye contact expected or considered to be impolite?

Multicultural Profile

Complete each sentence by placing a check in the appropriate box or boxes. If the statement does not apply to you, skip it (for example, if you were not in the military, you should skip that category). Add additional statements to the far left column for areas of your life not covered in the grid.

	White of European ancestry	African American	Latino	Asian American	Native American	Other (Name the category)
I am						
My spouse is						
My co-workers are						
My supervisor at work is						
Most of the students in my elementary school were						
Most of the students in my high school were						
My teachers were predominantly						
Most of my close friends are						
My doctor is						
My dentist is						
People who live in my home are						
People who visit my home are						
The people in homes I visit are						
The people where I shop are						
My college teachers are/were predominantly						
My college classmates are/ were predominantly						
My peers in the military are/ were						
Roommates I've had were						
People where I vacation are						

- Is close physical contact considered to be a natural part of friendly communication or is touching viewed as an intrusion into an individual's personal space?
- What does the family's orientation to health care emphasize—natural medicine, folk remedies, pharmaceutical medicine, faith healing, etc.?

Teachers can pick up clues to a family's orientation to some of these issues by observing parents carefully and listening to what parents say. Asking open ended questions on such topics as the parents' hopes and aspirations for their child and the values that they feel are the most important for their child to develop will provide more insights into the family's point of view. To discover the family's attitude on other issues, more direct questions are in order. When a question of the teacher's actions vis-à-vis the parents arises, it is best to ask the parents directly.

Carol was visiting in the home of Kim, who had just enrolled in her early childhood facility. In spite of the fact that Kim's mother, Lea, spoke broken English, Carol felt that she and the mother had found common ground in their interest in Kim, and Carol felt quite comfortable chatting with her.

As she prepared to leave, Carol touched Lea on the arm and was surprised to note that Lea instinctively drew away from her touch. Lea obviously felt uncomfortable, although she said nothing.

"I'm sorry," Carol said softly. "I didn't mean to be intrusive. In my culture we touch other people often as a sign of friendship. I didn't mean to be insensitive to your feelings."

Lea smiled. "Our ways are different," she said.

"I respect your different views," Carol told her. "I look forward to talking to you further and learning more about your culture."

"Thank you for coming to our home," Lea said. "I hope you will come again. I want to learn about your culture, too—the American culture. My children are in American schools, now, and they are beginning to think I am odd and old fashioned. Even little Kim will think that soon," she added with a somewhat nervous laugh.

"Not odd; just different," Carol said.

Carol was glad that she had spoken honestly and openly to Kim's mother about the incident and not just walked away as though she had not noticed the other woman's discomfort. And she was looking forward to learning more about a new culture.

Many Americans tend to stereotype people of Latino, Asian, or Middle Eastern ancestry as "foreigners." The teacher should be careful not to automatically assume that members of these ethnic groups are new immigrants. The families of many Americans whose physical appearance is like that of their Latino, Asian, or Middle Eastern ancestors have lived in the United States for generations. Yet it is common for U.S. citizens of Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent to be asked such questions as, "How long have you been in the U.S.?" or to be told "You speak English very well." By recognizing people as individuals rather than stereotypes, the teacher can avoid unintentional insults and establish a more harmonious relationship with families from the start.

Parents as Ambassadors for Cultural Diversity

As our nation becomes more and more ethnically diverse, it is increasingly essential for each American, both adults and children, to have knowledge of different cultures. It is never too early for children to begin developing an awareness of and an appreciation for cultural diversity.

Young children who are fortunate enough to have classmates from a variety of cultural backgrounds have the opportunity to experience first-hand what other children must learn from books or films or television. If you have a culturally diverse classroom, take advantage of the opportunities that this provides for developing your own and the children's cultural awareness, sensitivity, and appreciation. The cultural bridges that you help children and their families build in the early childhood years will contribute to a stronger, more tolerant and inclusive American society in years to come.

Invite parents whose cultural background is different from that of the majority of the children in your classroom to get involved in as many ways as possible. They can

- tell stories about their native country,
- show photographs of their native country,
- explain their unique cultural practices, especially ones that involve children,
- sing songs in their native language,
- teach the children words from their native language,
- model clothing from their native country,
- introduce foods from their native country,
- show art and crafts from their native country.

These and other interactions will help the children develop a friendly attitude toward the new culture.

Of course, every contact that the children have with parents from other cultures does not have to involve learning about that culture. These parents should be welcome to participate in routine activities in the same way as all parents do. As the "different" parents become

involved in everyday activities, the children will learn to accept them for who they are, not just as someone who is there to teach about different ways of living.

Language Barriers

One of the most difficult family "differences" for many teachers to deal with is language. This is understandable, since communication is so important between the teacher and the child's parents. If parents do not speak or understand English well, it may be very difficult for the teacher to communicate. This can be frustrating to the teacher, but it is probably even more frustrating to the parents. Parents who cannot speak or understand English often feel uncertain and awkward and perhaps even fearful and inferior when trying to communicate with their child's teacher. The effective teacher must treat these parents with sensitivity and respect and reassure them that they are welcome and important regardless of their facility with English.

The vast majority of Americans today are descended from non-English-speaking immigrants. Many of those who have English ancestors also have some non-English ancestors. So at some time in the past, almost all of us have had some ancestors who were language minorities. Remembering this when you are feeling frustrated trying to deal with non-English-speaking parents should help you be more understanding and accommodating to the needs of these parents while they are adjusting to a new language and a new culture.

Communicating with Parents Who Have Limited English

Communication with non-English-proficient parents will be easier if you observe some simple guidelines:

- In all face-to-face contacts, make sure that your body language—your facial expression, tone of voice, and manner—is cordial and conveys friendliness and acceptance. Do not speak or act in a condescending or patronizing way. (Of course, this rule should be followed at all times with *all* parents, not just those with limited English!)
- Before any face-to-face meeting with parents with limited English, give parents a written report that they can read as many times as they need to—with the help of a dictionary if necessary. This report should summarize the child's progress, strengths, and weaknesses, and mention any problems that need to be addressed. The report should be written in clear, simple sentences. Ask parents to bring any questions they have to your face-to-face conference. Assure them that no matter what their questions are, you will be happy to try to answer them.
- Speak slowly.
- Use simple, clear English. This includes clear, complete sentences and simple sentence structure. Avoid slang, idioms, and figures of speech. These are likely to be confusing to people with a limited knowledge of English. Clear English also means using simple, common words. If you need to use special terms, explain or define these terms.
- When possible, use an interpreter. Be sensitive to the interpreter's level of understanding of English. The interpreter may also be rather new to English, so again, speak slowly and use simple, clear English. When using an interpreter, do not act or speak as though the parent is not present. Speak *to* the parent, not *about* the parent.
- Reassure the parents that it is OK for them to ask any questions they may have—including asking you to repeat anything they have not understood. Assure them that your feelings will not be hurt if you have not made yourself clear the first time.

Using Limited-English Parents in the Classroom

Note: All early childhood facilities must follow their own state's regulations regarding volunteers in the classroom.

Parents with limited English can be involved as volunteers in the classroom in many ways. Here are some suggestions:

- preparing bulletin board or other display;
- assisting in playground supervision;
- playing games with small groups of children;
- mending or repairing equipment, such as dress-up clothing;
- assisting in food preparation;
- introducing ethnic food;
- accompanying the group on a field trip;
- teaching children songs in parent's language.

Learning songs in other languages is a special treat for children. Inviting a parent with limited English to teach the children a song in her/his native language will not only please the children but will convey to the parent that she or he is valued and accepted. Children from non-English-speaking homes will also enjoy hearing their peers sing songs in their home language. This is an excellent way to honor their cultural background and make them feel special. The English-speaking children in turn can teach their guest English songs, thus helping the parent to become more fluent in English.

Self Check 3.2. True/False

___ 1. All people of a particular ethnic background share the same customs, lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviors.

___ 2. The best way for a teacher to show respect for a family whose cultural background is different from her/his own is to quietly assume that the family shares the teacher's own values and beliefs.

___ 3. Understanding and accepting differences in family values, attitudes, and structures is just as important for teachers as understanding and accepting differences among children.

___ 4. As children observe people who appear different from themselves participating in everyday activities, they learn to accept them for who they are.

___ 5. Caregivers and teachers should treat parents who have limited knowledge of English with sensitivity and respect and reassure them that they are welcome and important.

___ 6. There is little that non-English speaking parents can do as volunteers in the classroom.

___ 7. When using an interpreter to communicate with parents who speak limited English the teacher should still speak slowly and use simple, clear English.

___ 8. Even when using an interpreter the teacher should speak to the parent, not about the parent.

___ 9. Giving parents who do not speak English well a written report about their child before you meet with them face-to-face is usually a waste of effort because they probably can't read English either.

(1. F, 2. F, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. F, 7. T, 8. T, 9. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 1, 2, 6 and 9 of Self Check 3.2 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

1. Not all people of a particular ethnic background share the same customs, lifestyles, beliefs, and behaviors. Children and parents are individuals, not just members of groups. People may share beliefs and values with others of their ethnic background, yet every family is unique.

2. Teachers should learn from each family their views and customs regarding issues that affect their child. Recognizing the family's point of view will help establish a more harmonious relationship with families from the start.

6. Parents with limited English can be involved in the classroom in many ways. For example, they can help by preparing a bulletin board or other display, playing games with small groups of children, or teaching children songs in the parent's language.

9. Communication during a face-to-face meeting can be made easier by providing parents with limited English a written report that they can read as many times as they need to before the meeting.

Lesson 3 Quiz

Please read Lesson 3 two times before attempting its quiz. When you have finished reading this lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at www.CareCourses.com and open your course file to access the Online Quiz for this lesson.

Lesson 4

Communication with Families and Staff

Learning Objectives

In Lesson 4 you will learn

- the importance of communication between teachers and parents
- characteristics of a good teacher–parent relationship
- what information teachers need from parents
- information teachers should provide for parents
- ways to ensure a congenial relationship with children's parents
- how to plan and conduct parent conferences
- characteristics of successful communication with parents
- the importance of teamwork among staff members
- guidelines for harmonious staff relationships
- a five-step problem-solving process

* * *

This lesson focuses on the importance of good communication between

(1) teachers and families and

(2) teachers and other staff members.

Communication with Families

There are several types of families in modern society. Some children are reared by both of their biological parents. Others are reared by a single parent, by grandparents, stepparents, or in a family group of related or non-related members.

In this lesson we will use the term *parent* to refer to the person or persons who are legally responsible for the children in your care.

The Early Childhood Facility's Responsibilities to Parents

Child care providers have a responsibility to keep in close contact with the parents of children in their care. This includes (1) providing important information about the child and the facility's program to parents as well as (2) obtaining information about the child from parents.

Information Teachers Must Provide to Parents

When parents enroll their child, the family day care provider or center director should give parents

(1) A written policy statement about their facility's program and staff to help parents understand and evaluate the child care facility. This statement should include, but is not limited to the following

- the responsibilities of the program;
- the responsibilities of the parent;
- the facility's policies regarding admission;
- the disciplinary and positive guidance policy;
- the program activities to be provided;
- toys, play equipment, and other learning materials available for the children's use;
- parents' access to their children at the child care facility;
- parents' access to records and other information kept by the facility about their child;
- policies regarding parent conferences with the child's teacher;
- policies regarding privacy and confidentiality;
- the food service arrangements, menus, and eating schedules;
- sleeping arrangements and schedules;
- diapering and toileting procedures;
- a summary of the program's health care policies, including the level of illness the center will accommodate;
- sanitation procedures;
- safety and security procedures;
- information about the placement and use of video surveillance cameras, if any, at the facility;
- emergency evacuation procedures;
- policy regarding the release of children and actions the facility will take in the event the child is not picked up as scheduled;
- tuition and other fee schedules and payment arrangement plans;
- printed information concerning child abuse and maltreatment including the steps parents may take if they suspect their child has been abused or maltreated.

All of the facility's policies must follow state regulations.

(2) A copy of their state's regulations governing either family day care homes or child care centers.

Facilities should also provide parents with nutritional information about requirements for food groups and quantities specified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture child care food program minimum meal requirements.

SIDS Risk Reduction Information for Parents

The parents of infants in your care will appreciate being informed of the procedures used in your facility for reducing the risk of SIDS. The regulations in some states require that you make this information available to parents. Here are some ways that you can communicate this information to parents:

- Prepare a written statement outlining your procedures for reducing the risk of SIDS. A sample statement is printed on this page.
- Give a copy of your SIDS Risk Reduction Statement to parents of infants when they inquire about your facility.
- Verbally call attention to your procedures for reducing the risk of SIDS when speaking to infants' parents when they first inquire about your facility. Explain that these are good procedures for parents to follow at home also.
- Assure parents that all staff members who care for infants at your facility have completed SIDS risk reduction training and that they follow the procedures outlined in your printed SIDS Risk Reduction Statement.
- When giving new or prospective clients a tour of your facility, show them the sleeping area and point out how you place infants on their back in the crib for naps.
- Include two copies of your SIDS Risk Reduction Statement with the materials you give to parents when they enroll their infant in your care. Unless the infant has a

Sample SIDS Risk Reduction Statement to give to parents

* * *

Procedures Used by
(Name of Your Facility)
to
Reduce the Risk of SIDS

- We always put infants to sleep on their back unless we have written instructions from the infant's doctor directing us to do otherwise.
- We closely monitor sleeping infants to make certain that they are not overheated.
- We use only firm, flat crib mattresses for infants.
- We make certain there is no loose bedding or soft toys or pillows where the infants are sleeping.
- We make certain that the infant's head remains uncovered during sleep.
- Infants in our facility are supervised by a staff member at all times, even when the infants are sleeping.
- All staff members who care for infants in our facility are trained in infant CPR and know to resuscitate infants if they do stop breathing for any reason.

Please sign two copies of this statement in the space provided below. Return one copy to our facility and keep one copy for your own records.

We look forward to working with you to keep your infant safe, healthy, and happy.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

(Name of your facility)

We, the parents of (name of infant), have read this SIDS Risk Reduction Statement and understand that our baby will be placed to sleep on his/her back while in care at (name of your facility).

_____ _____

(Print parents' names below their signatures.)

medical condition that requires a different sleeping position, have parents sign both copies, one copy for you and one for them to keep.

- If an infant requires a different sleeping position, have parents give you written, signed instructions from their infant's doctor explaining the recommended sleeping position for the infant.

Situations That Require Notification of Parents

The child care provider or administrator must notify parents:

- when their child has been exposed to a diagnosed or suspected communicable disease;
- immediately, if the child becomes ill or is injured seriously enough to require professional medical treatment;
- when a parent picks up the child or when the child is delivered, if the child sustains a minor injury;
- of changes in staff and/or when substitutes or alternative caregivers will be caring for their children;
- of changes in meal policies or menus;
- of the date, time, and destination of any field trip that requires the use of a vehicle
- at least forty-eight hours prior to the application of pesticides at the facility giving
  (1) the location,
  (2) specific date of the application,
  (3) pesticide product name and pesticide registration number assigned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and
  (4) the name of a representative of the facility and contact telephone number for additional information

A sample statement to be given to parents is printed below. Some states require that a statement of this nature be given to parents. All facilities must know and follow their own state's requirements regarding the use of pesticides or other toxic products at their facility.

Information for the Parents' Bulletin Board

Provide a bulletin board in a conspicuous place that is easily accessible to parents and use this board to post both standard policy information and current program information that parents need to know.

Some facilities use a single bulletin board, designating one area for the children's use and reserving a portion for parent information. Other facilities use a separate bulletin board just for parent information. In either case, the parents' area should be clearly defined and kept up to date.

Include such items as

- Information on special activities that you plan for the children
- Photos of children engaged in activities at the facility
- Messages from the children to their parents
- Reminders of upcoming events
- Special requests, such as for children's dress-up play

Also include the following policy information on the parents' bulletin board. Posting of these items is required by many states' regulations.

- Menus
- Written plan for the emergency evacuation of children from the facility (must be approved by state licensing agency)
- Copy of the facility's child care policies

Notice to Parents

Date

This notice is to inform you of a pending pesticide application at this facility.

The following area(s) of the facility will be treated: _____.

The scheduled date of application is _____.

The name of the pesticide product that will be applied is _____. The product's pesticide registration number, which is assigned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is _____.

If you wish to discuss with a representative of the day care facility what precautions are being taken to protect your child from exposure to these pesticides, you may phone _____ at the following number _____.

Further information about the product or products being applied, including any warnings that appear on the label of the pesticide or pesticides that are pertinent to the protection of humans, animals, or the environment, can be obtained by calling the National Pesticide Telecommunications Network Information line at 1-800-858-7378. Or you may contact the state Environmental Health Info Line at _____.

(Signed)
Director of Facility

- Universal precautions used by staff members (see sample statement below)

Information Teachers Need from Parents

At the time of enrollment, obtain the following written information from parents using forms approved or accepted by your state.

Enrollment information

- The child's name
- The child's date of birth
- The full names and addresses of the child's parents
- The child's home address and telephone number
- An address and telephone number where a parent can be reached while the child is in care
- The name, address, telephone number, and relationship to the child of a person to be notified in an emergency when a parent cannot be reached immediately
- The name, address, and telephone of a physician or medical facility caring for child
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons other than a parent who are authorized to call for the child or to accept the child who is dropped off
- The child's first day of attendance

Universal Precautions

The staff at Glen Falls Child Care uses universal precautions when exposed to blood and blood-containing body fluids and injury discharges of all children.

- All persons exposed to blood or blood-containing body fluids and tissue discharges shall wash their hands immediately with soap and warm running water.
- Single use disposable gloves shall be worn if there is contact with blood-containing body fluids or tissue discharges. Hands shall be washed with soap and water after removal of gloves. Gloves shall be discarded in plastic bags.
- For spills of vomits, urine, feces, blood or other body fluids, center staff shall clean and disinfect the floors, walls, bathrooms, tabletops, toys, kitchen countertops and diaper changing tables.

Additional information on infants and toddlers:

- A current schedule of the child's meals and feeding
- Types of food introduced and timetable for new foods
- For infants, you will need information about the formula as well as the child's feeding schedule. This information must be updated as needed.
- A current statement of the child's habits of toileting or diapering procedures
- A current statement of the child's sleep and nap schedule
- The child's way of communicating
- Specific techniques that appear to comfort the child

Information on infants and toddlers must be kept on file in the room or area to which the child is assigned and must be known to the child care worker. Caregivers must document changes in the child's development and routines at least every three months based on discussions with the child's parent.

Developmental and Health History

At the time of enrollment you should also obtain a developmental and health history and immunization record for each child using forms supplied by or approved by your state. You should have this information on file by the child's first day of attendance.

Parents should keep the child's immunization records up to date.

Permissions

At the time of enrollment, obtain parents' written and signed permission for emergency medical treatment using a form supplied by or approved by your state.

You will also need written and signed authorization from parents for any of the following that apply to the children in your care:

- Authorization to administer medications or topical ointments (see your state regulations)
- Authorization to transport the child to and from the child care facility
- Authorization for the child to participate in and be transported for field trips and other activities
- Authorization for the child to use swimming pools (as permitted by your state's regulations)
- An agreement that specifies the attendance schedule to be followed for school-age after-school care and authorizes the child's release to activities away from the center
- Specific informed written consent for each incident of participation by a child in any research or testing project

Additional Information

Consult your state's regulations for any additional information or permissions you are required to get from parents.

Plan toilet learning in cooperation with the parent so that a child's toilet routine is consistent between the center and the child's home, except that no routine attempts may be made to toilet train a child under 18 months of age.

Good Rules for a Good Teacher-Parent Relationship

- Keep the teacher-parent relationship professional.
- Don't compete with parents.
- Stay out of family conflicts.
- Treat all parents equally.
- Be confidential.

Remember that you are a partner with parents in helping their children grow and develop in a positive manner.

Conferences with Parents

Face-to-face meetings between the teacher and parents can help to build a cooperative interpersonal rapport and pave the way for a productive partnership in which teachers and parents work together to meet the child's needs. Ideally, conferences should be held at regular intervals with all parents. For young children, it is best to have a conference at least every six months, preferably more often.

Conferences allow the teacher and the parents to get to know each other. They also allow the partners in the child's care to learn from each other by sharing insights about the child. Conferences should provide a relaxed time to look at the child's strengths and weaknesses, to set goals and make plans, and to assess previous strategies and plans.

Scheduling Conferences

Conferences should be scheduled at a time that is convenient for the parent(s). Some parents can come during the day; some can come during their lunch hour; others can come only after work. The conference schedule should be flexible enough to accommodate each parent's needs.

Schedule adequate time to discuss the issues important to parents and teacher. Conferences will probably require less time if the teacher meets with each child's parents regularly every six or eight weeks.

Be ready for each conference when the parents arrive. If the conference is held at the parents' home or some other place besides your classroom or your home, arrive promptly. Tell the parents how long the meeting will be when you schedule the conference, then conclude the conference at the time agreed upon. If the time allotted is not sufficient, schedule a follow-up conference.

If conferences with more than one child's parents are to be held in succession, it is a good idea to allow a short interval (perhaps ten minutes) between each one. This helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere and also gives the teacher time to collect her or his thoughts for the next conference.

Be prepared for parents who arrive early for their conference. Provide a comfortable place for them to wait, something interesting for them to read or look at while they wait, and perhaps some refreshment. If several conferences are held in succession, provide a schedule (on a chalkboard, poster, or sheet of paper) in the waiting area showing the time for each conference, the parents' name, where the conferences are being held, and any other pertinent information.

Preparing for a Teacher–Parent Conference

Planning for teacher-parent communication is just as important as planning for the children's day. Without adequate planning, real communication may not happen even though the parent and teacher meet and talk. For a variety of reasons, the teacher may fail to tell the parent what really needs to be told.

Set the Stage

Thought should be given to the physical surroundings for parent–teacher conferences. Successful conferences can be held at the school or child care facility, in the parents' home, or in the family childcare provider's home. The place that is best for you will depend on your own circumstances.

Select a place where you can sit comfortably and have an uninterrupted, private conversation. If the meeting is held in a classroom, provide adult-sized chairs for yourself and the parents. Your seating arrangement should convey equal status for the parents and yourself. Avoid any seating arrangement that places you in a dominant position vis-á-vis the parents. Sitting behind a desk or even across a table from the parents can be intimidating to them. If you do sit at a table, sit side by side or at an angle to the parents.

Plan for Good Communication

The following steps will help the teacher ensure good communication at a parent–teacher conference:

1. ***Identify***
   - what it is you want to communicate to the parents
   - why you feel the parents should be told this information
   - what, if anything, you would like the parents to do with this information
   - what information you want to learn from the parents

2. ***Observe*** each child daily and make notes. Keep these notes in a separate file for each child. Read over your notes on each particular child before your conference with that child's parents.

Your notes should allow you to assess each child's strengths and needs. Some points to cover in your observations and notes:

- What are the child's current interests? How have these interests changed over time?
- Does the child feel good about him or herself? Does the child exhibit self-confidence?

- What growth has occurred in the child's sense of autonomy and initiative?
- What growth has occurred in the child's ability to persist in completing a task?
- What emotions does the child express most frequently? Is the child able to express a range of emotions? Are there emotions the child has difficulty recognizing and/or expressing appropriately? What progress has the child made in dealing with fears and frustrations?
- What are the child's current abilities? Include language, thinking, reasoning, motor, creative, and social abilities and skills. How have the child's ability levels changed over time?
- What new experiences has the child been introduced to? How has the child responded?
- What new tasks/experiences has the child tried on her or his own? With what success?
- With whom does the child play? How does the child get along with other children in general?
- What needs does the child seem to be working on?
- What activities have you (the teacher) provided to meet the child's current needs?

3. ***Gather data*** to share with parents.

- Take photos of the child participating in various activities.
- Make an audiotape of the child telling a story.
- Keep a folder of the child's art or other work. Showing things the child has done over a period of time is a good way for parents to appreciate the child's progress.

4. ***Include parents' ideas*** in the conference agenda. Send or give a letter to each parent approximately two weeks before the conference asking them to list questions they have and issues they would like to discuss at the conference. Ask parents to prioritize their topics in case there is not enough time at this conference to discuss everything.

This letter should also confirm the conference place, date, and time—both the beginning and ending times. Send two copies of this letter to the parents. Ask them to return one copy of the letter with their list on it to you at least a week before the conference so that you can be prepared to answer their questions.

One early childhood facility gives each child's parents a notebook at the beginning of the school year and asks the parents to write down any questions they have or issues they want to discuss with the child's teacher as the questions or topics come to mind. The parents are also asked to bring this notebook to every parent–teacher conference. This system makes it easy for the parents to have a part in formulating the conference agenda and assures the parents that their child's teacher takes their concerns seriously. At the conference parents are encouraged to use their notebook to record goals that are set, proposed solutions to problems that are discussed, and any other information from the conference that they might find helpful later on.

Before the conference, gather data to answer the parents' questions. Being thorough and honest will help gain the parents' trust and future cooperation.

At the Conference

The mood of the entire conference will be influenced by what occurs in the first few moments after parents arrive. Your warm smile and friendly greeting at the door will help ease any tensions or misgivings parents may bring with them. If you are not already acquainted with them, introduce yourself. Using your first name will help put parents at ease.

To help ensure a productive conference, clearly define your own conference goals in advance. In addition to specific goals for each individual conference, some important general goals for all conferences are listed below.

- Recognition of the child's positive accomplishments
- Reinforcement of parents' positive contributions to their child's development and learning
- Identification of child's current needs and ways that you and the parents can work together to meet these needs

Begin the conference with a positive statement about the child. This must be an honest statement. Never exaggerate. Parents know their child better than you do. They will know when you are saying something just to impress them.

Here are some examples of conference openers that other teachers have used:

> *"I really enjoy Manuel's sunny disposition."*
>
> *"Susan's smile always makes me feel happy."*
>
> *"Bobby is so eager to learn new things these days."*
>
> *"Ruby likes to help the other children. She was especially helpful when we had a new child last week."*

It is a good idea to make the parents' highest priority topic your first topic of discussion. You will know what this topic is from the conference planning letter–questionnaire you asked the parents to complete. Parents may be unable to give their full attention to the issues on your agenda if issues of major concern to them are occupying their minds. If parents listed more topics on the questionnaire than can be dealt with at one conference, schedule another conference.

Assure parents that it is OK for them to ask you questions and offer their opinions and suggestions. Some parents will have no trouble sharing their thoughts with you as an equal status partner. Others will need your reassurance that such behavior on their part is acceptable.

Never minimize or dismiss an issue that parents see as a problem. An incident that may seem insignificant to you may be quite troublesome for the parents. If they view the issue as a problem, it is a problem to them.

Be aware of who is "in control" of the conference. In general, the teacher is—and should remain—in control. This is true partly because the teacher is the professional and partly because conferences are generally held in the teacher's territory.

What does being "in control" of the conference mean? First let us be very clear about what it does *not* mean. The teacher's control of the conference does not mean that the teacher should dominate the conversation or the agenda or behave in an authoritarian, controlling manner. Rather, it means that the teacher has the professional responsibility to guide the conference toward the goal of promoting the child's growth and development and building a positive partnership with the parent that will help achieve this goal.

Keep the focus on the child as the conference continues. Relate specific anecdotes of the child's experiences and behavior. Here is where the notes you have kept on the child will come in handy. Show the parents samples of their child's work. Ask parents to talk about the child's activities and behavior at home. Listen attentively and make notes of things you need to remember. Parents' observations will give you valuable insights about the child. In addition, your attention to parents' contribution to the conference will help put you and the parents on a more equal basis.

Write down any suggestions that parents make. They will be pleased to see you taking their ideas and suggestions seriously. Use the parents' suggestions when possible and appropriate and report back to the parents how well their ideas worked.

If a child has multiple problems, it is best to prioritize and deal with only one problem area at any one conference. Trying to deal with too much at one conference can overwhelm parents. Also, the solutions you and the parents agree to try will likely be more successful if you and they keep a narrower focus.

Avoid using jargon. If you must use terms that may not be familiar to parents, explain each term as you use it.

Never make promises to parents that you cannot keep.

Never lecture parents. Avoid statements like *"You should," "You shouldn't,"* or *"I think you're wrong."*

If you feel that a parent's point of view or proposed actions are harmful to the child, try examining the issue with the parents using open-ended, exploratory questions: *"I wonder how that will affect Sue's feelings about herself?" "Do you feel that Jim is ready for…?"* General statements regarding children's needs and abilities at various developmental stages may also be helpful: *"In general, two-year olds…," "After babies are about seven months old…."* By using exploratory questions and general statements about child development you can move the conversation in the desired direction, include the parent in the quest for the appropriate action or solution, and (extremely important) avoid a direct challenge to the parent.

Never raise your voice. If parents begin raising their voices, speak more softly yourself. *Always* remain calm and objective.

Clear up any misunderstandings. Parents sometimes become upset because they do not have all the facts or have inaccurate information. Ask questions to determine the parent's understanding of the incident in question: *"What did your child say happened?"*

Keep track of the time as the conference progresses. Discuss the most important topics first. Try to guide the conversation so that all important issues are covered. If time runs out, schedule a follow-up conference to cover the left-over issues.

Basic Ground Rules:

- Show respect for the parents. No exceptions.

In most cases, showing respect for parents will probably be easy. Sometimes, however, it will not be. But regardless of your personal feelings toward any particular parents, treat them with respect. You are a professional. Your relationship with parents is a professional relationship. There is absolutely no place for personal hostilities or pettiness in a professional relationship. You are also likely to find that difficult parents are less difficult when they are treated with respect.

Parents' attitudes toward their child's teacher have a direct influence on the child. Children can sense their parents' attitudes toward their teacher even if they do not discuss the subject directly with their child. Parents' negative attitudes toward you will jeopardize your effectiveness in working with their child. Therefore, if you sense a negative or hostile attitude in a parent, it is in everyone's best interest for you, the teacher, to make every effort to bring harmony to your relationship. Your face-to-face conference with parents gives you an excellent opportunity to improve a strained relationship. Treating parents with respect is the cornerstone of a harmonious parent–teacher relationship.

- Be honest. No exceptions.

Even if you must tell parents things that you feel they will not want to hear, you *must* be honest. Think how you would feel in a similar situation, and think of the implications for the child's welfare. Unless both you and the parents face any problems openly and honestly, you are unlikely to be able to help the child.

If a parent brings up an issue that is difficult for you to talk about, tell the parent that you feel uneasy. Your honesty about how you feel will show your willingness to enter into a dialogue with the parents and lead to better communication between you and the parents. If a parent asks a question that you cannot answer, admit that you don't know.

Then decide with the parents the best way to find the answer.

- Respect each family's privacy. Talk with parents about their own child, not about any other child. No exceptions.

Parents must be able to trust that you will not talk about their problems or their child's problems with other people. Whatever is said in conferences between parents and the teacher must remain *strictly confidential.* If you betray another child's privacy when talking with one set of parents, they will probably assume that you will betray their privacy when talking with other parents. This will not contribute to a sense of trust between you and the parents.

- Listen to what parents have to say.

The teacher should listen to the parents more than half of the conference time. This is *extremely* important. What you learn from the parents is every bit as important as what you want them to learn from you.

Keep in mind that parents view their child from a different perspective than you do. What you see and what the parents see may not be the same. However, *both the parents' perspective and the teacher's perspective are valid points of view.* Each party sees the child at a different time and in a different set of circumstances. You may feel that the parents' views regarding the child are unrealistic. Sometimes you may be correct, or partially correct, in this assumption. But children—and families—can be complicated. Don't be quick to discount the parents' assessment of their child. By listening carefully to what parents have to say, you will most likely gain important insights regarding their child's interests, abilities, and needs.

Discussing Children with Difficult Behaviors

Caregivers and teachers are often especially apprehensive when they must discuss children's difficult behaviors with parents.

A good way to begin a discussion of difficult behavior is to present your observation or opinion of the need the child seems to be trying to meet with the inappropriate behavior.

"It seems that Ray is …"
"I wonder if Ray is …"

This approach indicates to parents that you see their child as an individual with legitimate needs who needs guidance in learning acceptable ways to successfully meet those needs.

- Discuss possible causes for the child's inappropriate behaviors. Try to determine what needs the child is trying to meet.
- Ask if the parents have observed similar behavior at home.
- Talk about the child's difficult or inappropriate *behaviors,* not about a *difficult child.* One of the tasks of early childhood is to learn appropriate ways to meet one's needs. While children are learning, the manner in which they go about meeting their needs may be totally inappropriate. It may be disruptive or harmful to other children. It may be distressing or even infuriating to adults. It may even cause harm to the child. Categorizing a child with difficult behaviors as a "bad child" or a "difficult child" is counterproductive. It lowers the child's self-esteem, and it is very likely to alienate the child's parents. However much trouble children may give their parents at home, few parents are able to hear others negatively characterizing their child without being offended.
- Be specific. Give examples. If an inappropriate behavior seems to be triggered by a particular event, note that.
- Relate to the parents any positive guidance strategies you have found that seem to help their child.
- Ask parents to suggest solutions to child's behavior problems. If the parents have no suggestions, offer alternatives yourself, discuss the consequences of each possible solution, and let the parents help select the most appropriate strategy.
- Discuss ways in which home and day care/school practices can become consistent with each other.

Talking with parents about their child's difficult behavior or other problems is seldom easy for the teacher. Such conversations are equally stressful for parents. Perhaps it is the anticipation of parents' stress that makes the process difficult for the teacher.

When you have information that you need to communicate to parents, it is important that you make sure they have heard and understood what you said. This is true in any situation, of course, but it may be a more difficult task to accomplish when what you are telling parents is something they do not want to hear. In her book *Parents and Teachers Together* Mary Stacey writes: "You may need to check that the parent has understood what is said by repeating it. This is not doubting a person's intelligence. But someone who is anxious or annoyed does not always find it easy to listen. We all block out what we do not want to hear. People need time to think, to digest facts. Even if it is straightforward information that you are giving, you need to be sure that there are no misunderstandings."

Always spell everything out in so many words. Don't use vague language and assume that parents will "get what you mean" or "read between the lines."

Be specific. The phrase "We need to talk about Bill's problem" could mean something entirely different to Bill's parents than it means to you.

It is also extremely important that you make sure you understand what the par-

ents are trying to communicate to you. When listening to parents, don't jump to conclusions. Never assume that you understand what a person is going to say or intends to say. Don't hesitate to ask parents to clarify what they are telling you. You won't appear dumb. Instead, you will indicate to parents that you are truly interested in what they have to tell you.

If you have even the slightest doubt that you have understood parents accurately, check your understanding of what they have said by restating what you have heard and asking if you have understood them correctly. Make sure, of course, that your tone of voice clearly conveys that this is not a hostile query. Adding something like *"What you are telling me is so important that I want to be absolutely sure we're on the same wavelength"* will help assure parents of your friendly, supportive intent.

What you learn from parents is an extremely important part of the conference. Here are some suggestions for learning from parents:

- Give parents time to talk about whatever child-related issues they wish to discuss. Since conference time is limited, and since your focus is on the child, steer conversation away from irrelevant issues and avoid discussions of family problems that do not relate directly to the child in your care.
- Invite parents to share their observations of their child, their experiences with their child, their concerns and suggestions.
- Encourage open discussion in which parents feel free to discuss what is important to them.
- Ask parents questions. Sometimes you will need to ask rather direct questions to learn pertinent facts. Open-ended questions and analytical questions that require reflection and consideration of underlying causes of behavior can be particularly illuminating. Questions that can be answered by a simple yes or no do nothing to advance the discussion or enhance good communication. Sometimes yes or no questions can effectively stop the conversation. Keep in mind that asking questions is a very teacher-like thing to do. It is important to remember that your role with parents is not that of teacher but of partner.

Often the child's behavior problems are the direct result of family problems. The child may be suffering from a lack of attention at home. The family may be experiencing changes that are unsettling to the child but which the child does not understand. The parents may be experiencing economic hardships (poverty, unemployment). One or both parents may have a problem with substance abuse. The child may be the victim of physical or emotional abuse at home. It is understandable that the teacher may feel uncertain about how to determine just what problems the child's family is experiencing without prying or appearing judgmental. The teacher's best strategy is to keep the conversation centered on the child's needs and show a willingness to be understanding and supportive of the family's special needs.

It is often very difficult for teachers not to blame parents for children's difficult behaviors. But blame is an extremely destructive attitude. Recognizing that parents' inappropriate behaviors or misguided parenting practices are the sources of children's difficult behaviors is not the same as *blaming* parents. Parents who do hurtful things to their children are undoubtedly hurting very badly themselves. Both children *and* parents need help and support.

Your professional obligation to parents is to assist them insofar as you are able to develop positive parenting practices and to encourage them to get the professional help they need. Your professional obligation to difficult children is to provide a balance of love, consistency, opportunities for independence, and fair boundaries. You must also report child abuse or neglect to the proper social service or law enforcement agency in your area. It is also your professional responsibility to recognize when a child's problems are beyond your expertise and to encourage parents to seek appropriate professional help for their child.

Teacher Attitudes and Good Communication

Certain teacher attitudes *prevent* harmony between teacher and parents.

Harmful teacher attitudes include:

- being critical or judgmental of parents
- seeing parents as adversaries
- being aggressive
- being dogmatic or authoritarian—a "know-it-all"
- feeling that your objective is to show parents that they are wrong
- being negative toward or critical of their child
- not listening to parents' concerns and suggestions
- talking down to parents—being condescending or patronizing

The attitudes listed above prevent good communication because they undermine parents' confidence in their ability to contribute to their child's development and education. Parents who come to a conference feeling inadequate or with a preconceived idea that parents should assume a subordinate role vis-à-vis teachers will require extra effort on your part in order to accept the role of equal-status partner in their child's education. You can assist these parents through your

- recognition and appreciation of their efforts to help their child,
- attentive listening to their concerns, and
- acceptance and acknowledgment of their point of view and their emotional reactions to their child's situation.

Accepting and acknowledging parents' point of view does not mean that you have to agree with them. The parents' opinions and reactions may indeed be unfounded or in error. But until these opinions and feelings are expressed, experienced, and acknowledged, the parents will not be open to an objective examination or reevaluation. Your goal is to have parents leave the conference feeling confirmed as capable adults. Your reactions to parents can either achieve this goal and build their sense of competence or you can make them feel put down and diminished.

A quick reply dismissing or contradicting a parent's erroneous opinion or unfounded emotional reaction sends the message, *"I can handle things better than you,"* placing the parent in a subordinate role. Hearing, accepting, and acknowledging what parents say maintains their status as adults conferring with another adult as equal partners.

Avoid lecturing parents. Instead, solicit their help in problem-solving. If you are discussing a problem area, share strategies you have tried. Ask parents such questions as *What strategies have you tried? How has this worked? What other solutions have you considered? How do you think these might work? Which seems the best to you? How do you plan to put this plan into operation? How can I help?*

Helpful teacher attitudes that *promote* harmony with parents include:

- empathy—seeing things from the parents' point of view. Parents need to feel that you "know where they are coming from."
- genuine concern for the parents' interests
- genuine concern for their child's well-being
- honesty about your own feelings. What you say should be a true reflection of what you feel.
- flexibility
- open-mindedness
- professional self-confidence

End the conference by summarizing what has been discussed. This gives both you and the parents a sense of closure as well as an opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings that might have occurred. Go over any plans you have made during the conference to address problems that were discussed. Make sure your notes on these plans are clear. Agree on appropriate follow-up procedures—another conference, telephone consultations, written communications, etc.

Always end a conference on a positive note. This may be difficult if a conference has been tense or stressful, but in such a case it is especially important that teacher and parents part in a friendly manner.

If conversation has been strained, acknowledge this by candidly stating something like, *"We've worked on some tough problems today. It hasn't been easy, but I appreciate your time and your candidness and willingness to help. I'm sure I can do a much better job for your child because of your interest and input."* Such a statement helps both you and the parents return to a more harmonious frame of mind.

You may find it helpful to prepare for a difficult conference by role playing in advance with a colleague. You can preserve the family's privacy by not using their real names. First have your colleague take the role of the parent as you present the problem situation. Be aware of your feelings during this pretend conference. How do your feelings affect the way you present the issue to the parents? Ask your colleague how she (or he) felt about the conference. Also ask her to be candid about whether she felt that you presented the issue in a helpful way, what she noticed about how you expressed your feelings during the conference, and what your tone of voice, facial expressions, or other body language communicated.

Some emotions that teachers sometimes feel during conferences that deal with problems include annoyance, anger, fear, nervousness, anxiety, loss of confidence, intimidation, or defensiveness. Work through any negative feelings you may have before conference time to ensure the best possible communication between you and the parents. This is a situation in which professional behavior on your part is extremely important.

Next, have your colleague assume your role as teacher and you assume the parents' role. Have your colleague present the problem situation to you as though the child in question were your own. Be aware of your feelings as the pretend parent. Make a note of the concerns and questions that come to your mind. Use what you experience and learn from your role playing to guide your conversation with parents in the real conference.

Note the differences between how you felt in your role as teacher and in the parental role. There are many valid reasons for the differences in the two sets of emotions.

- Parents have a close, personal, emotional relationship with their child. Teachers must take a broader and more detached professional perspective.
- Parents see their child as an individual. Teachers see each child as an individual *and also* as a member of a group.
- Parents' focus is on their own child's needs. Teachers must focus on both individual and group needs.
- Parents know and understand their own child. Teachers have knowledge and understanding of children in general as well as specific knowledge about individual children.

Remember that *both* points of view are valid. Considering the differences in parents' and teachers' relationship to the child will help you empathize better with parents and communicate more successfully.

Successful Parent Communication

1. Have a clear purpose for communication.
2. Put parents at ease right away.
3. Be prepared.
4. ASK – don't tell.
5. Learn how to listen.
6. Avoid blaming parents.
7. Positive comments about the parents' children give children a chance to shine.
8. Accept and encourage parental involvement.
9. Keep parents continually informed.
10. Make certain that your child guidance techniques are appropriate with consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior.
11. Realize there are different attitudes and techniques for discipline.
12. Recognize that parents come from varied backgrounds with different values, traditions, etc.
13. Parents need praise and recognition for their efforts.
14. Be consistent and follow up.
15. Be supportive.
16. Keep accurate anecdotal notes.
17. Communication should be open.
18. Be positive.
19. Be objective about the children.
20. Be a resource.

Self Check 4.1. True/False

___ 1. Teachers have a responsibility to keep in close contact with parents of children in their care.

___ 2. Since teachers of young children usually see the child's parents daily when the parents bring and pick up the child, formal parent–teacher conferences are not necessary.

___ 3. If the time allotted for a conference isn't enough to discuss everything the teacher wants to talk about, she should insist that the conference continue as long as needed.

___ 4. The best seating arrangement at a parent–teacher conference is for the teacher and the parent to sit across a desk from each other.

___ 5. Clearly defined goals help ensure a productive parent–teacher conference.

___ 6. Since the teacher sees children daily, keeping written notes on the child's experiences, progress, and problems is unnecessary.

___ 7. A teacher's know-it-all attitude can prevent a harmonious parent–teacher relationship.

___ 8. Teachers should begin conferences with a positive statement about the child.

___ 9. It is the duty of teachers and parents to help young children learn appropriate ways to meet their needs.

___10. Teachers should never admit that they don't know the answer to a question parents ask.

(1. T, 2. F, 3. F, 4. F, 5. T, 6. F, 7. T, 8. T, 9. T, 10. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10 of Self Check 4.1 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

2. Conferences allow the teacher and the parents to get to know each other. They also allow the partners in the child's care to learn from each other by sharing insights about the child typically not shared during drop off and pick up times.

3. If the time allotted for the conference is not sufficient, schedule a follow-up conference.

4. Your seating arrangement should convey equal status for the parents and yourself. If you do sit at a table, sit side by side or at an angle to the parents.

6. Making daily observations allows you to continually assess each child's strengths and needs and provides you with points to cover during conferences with parents.

10. If a parent asks a question that you cannot answer, admit that you don't know and then decide with the parents the best way to find the answer.

* * *

Communication with Staff

Good staff relations begin with you and with how you work as a team member.

Teamwork

People work as part of a team in a childcare setting. Everyone plays an important role in children's development.

To participate effectively as a member of a childcare team, you should:

1. Honor the objectives of the early childhood facility and follow its rules while trying to achieve the facility's objectives.
2. Know your own duties and distinguish them from those of other staff members. Understand

individual roles, and cooperate with other staff members.

3. Accept responsibility and be willing to follow directions. Show initiative and volunteer to help others.

4. Communicate effectively, using **verbal** and **nonverbal** communication skills. Empathize and be willing to accept others as they are. Have a sense of humor and be able to laugh at yourself. Learn the names of children, parents, and staff so that you can call them by name. Listen carefully.

5. Use good work habits. Complete assigned tasks. Be on time. Show a sense of teamwork such as being dependable, flexible, and willing to help others.

6. Demonstrate professional ethics. Do not talk about the children and other staff members away from the center. Look at situations without favoritism and respond in a way that is in the best interest of the children and the early childhood facility.

Guidelines for Relating to Others

1. Speak first to every person you meet. There is nothing better than a cheerful word or greeting.

2. Smile as you greet people. It only takes 14 muscles to smile, but 72 to frown.
   Make this your policy: If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.

3. Call people by their names. It shows that you think them important enough to remember their names.

4. Be cordial. Act as though everything you do is a pleasure.

5. Be friendly and helpful. There is no better way to build a friendship than to give your own first.

6. Show a true interest in people. If you try, you'll like most people.

7. Be generous with praise and stingy with criticism.

8. Be considerate of the rights of others.

9. Be quick to give service. People will remember and tell others how you helped.

10. Take the nine suggestions above, add a sense of humor, and mix with understanding and humility.

How do you rate your human relations? How many of the 10 guidelines above are part of your daily practice? Early childhood professionals should work constantly to improve their relationships with others on the child care team.

Consider your job as a great and continuous adventure in the art of human relations.

Characteristics of a Good Listener

1. Look directly at the person who is talking.
2. Listen carefully to what is being said.
3. Be interested in the topic and in the person speaking.
4. Rephrase what has been said to see whether you understand what you have been told.

Problem-Solving Process

In any human relationships, including on the job interactions, problems are bound to arise. One way of solving problems is to go through the five-step problem-solving process. These steps are:

1. Problem Identification

A person identifies a problem when he acknowledges that a situation is affecting him, says that he wants/needs to change a situation or find out more about it, and is willing to assume some responsibility for taking steps toward solving the problem.

I need to find a way to involve the children in cleaning up the room.

I want to help the children learn to play soccer without fighting.

I need to find more planning time.

2. Problem Clarification

The problem clarification stage involves analyzing why the situation is a problem, what you have already tried or thought about, and your goals for changing the situation—for finding some answers.

Charlotte's problem is not liking a messy room at the end of the day. Her goal is to get the room cleaned up so she does not have to do it all herself.

Charlotte recalls that she has already talked to the class as a whole about her displeasure with a messy room at 3 p.m. each day. Two children had volunteered to be "mess monitors" each afternoon, but had been neglecting the responsibility.

Charlotte felt a need for a new approach, new ideas, and better plans for solving her problem. She has observed that it is primarily the science and art areas that are messiest each day—that Sam, Ray, Riha, and Cecelia have been leaving papers, bug collecting

boxes, and mounting boards in disarray.

Charlotte has also observed that when children use chalk and charcoal for their collage project, they have been creating havoc in the art area. After careful thought, Charlotte's redefined goal is to get these two centers cleaned up without teacher help or nagging.

3. Creation of Ideas

It is often helpful to gather ideas from as many sources as possible or for a small group to build an idea together. Individual and group creativity in coming up with new ideas needs to be encouraged and supported. There are many times, especially at first, when children or adults who are not used to having their ideas valued may be hesitant to volunteer them. Often, people do not even realize that they have good ideas. After some experience with generating ideas, people can become more trusting of the environment and more willing/able to generate creative ideas. As new ideas are developed, it is also important to anticipate the outcomes of their implementation.

To achieve her goal of preventing a messy classroom, Charlotte decided to talk to the children who had been using the science and art centers the most, to do this while they are working in the center the next day, to ask for their ideas, and to build on their ideas until one idea emerged that satisfied both the children and the teacher.

4. Implementation

The implementation stage involves deciding on and developing a plan that is based on the best idea that has been generated and to use whatever resources are necessary to carry out the plan.

Charlotte talked to the two groups of children the next day. She explained the problem to them and drew out their perspective. "I am thinking you have some ideas to solve the problem."

The group then decided who was to implement the best cleaning idea for each group. They shared their plans with the class so that all knew the plans for cleaning the two centers.

5. Evaluation

The evaluation stage involves comparing the results of carrying out the plan with the goals that were identified. Does the solution satisfy the goals? If not, why?

If the goal has not been met, retrace the problem-solving stages. Often if the solution is not satisfactory, another question or problem has surfaced, or there is another piece of the original problem that still must be solved.

Each day Charlotte will check the centers. Was the plan working? If so, she will tell the children and give them credit. If not, she will meet the children again to negotiate a new plan. Charlotte and the children involved will share the results of their new plan with the entire class.

If this problem-solving process is followed, and if everyone can feel a part of this process, many miscommunications can be corrected.

Problem-Solving Situations

Read the following sample problem situations. Think about solutions using the five-step problem-solving process.

1. Your director has scheduled you to close the child care center. You know that being left alone in charge of a group of children of this size is in violation of state licensing regulations.

2. You have heard your coworker sounding harsh when dealing with the children. At break time, the coworker says to you, "These children are all brats."

3. You are an assistant teacher in an early childhood facility. The lead teacher is always stepping in and taking over in guidance situations. You are feeling very frustrated about this.

4. The lead teacher is angry and yells, "Ashley wet her pants again. I don't think any of you remembered to remind her."

5. You overhead a coworker gossiping to a parent about another child enrolled in the childcare center.

Positive vs. Negative Interaction

Every activity can involve either positive or negative interaction. Let's consider a teacher's body language, for example. A pat on the shoulder and a wave of greeting are positive body language. Tensed up, tight posture is an example of negative body language.

For each activity listed below, think of at least one positive form and one negative form the activity can take in interaction with other staff members.

Facial Expression

Planning

Atmosphere

Responses

Self Check 4.2. True/False

___ 1. Good team members know their own duties and distinguish them from the duties of other staff members.

___ 2. Good team members accept responsibility, show initiative, and volunteer to help others.

___ 3. A good team member is dependable, flexible, and completes assigned tasks.

___ 4. Calling people by name contributes to good human relations.

___ 5. Offering your own friendship is a good way to build a friendship.

___ 6. Being considerate of the rights of others contributes to good human relations.

___ 7. The first step in the problem-solving process is to gather ideas from as many sources as possible.

___ 8. Clarifying a problem involves identifying your goals for changing the situation.

___ 9. A good listener looks directly at the person who is talking.

___10. Rephrasing what has been said to see whether you have understood what you have been told is a mark of a good listener.

___11. As new problem-solving ideas are developed, it is helpful to think about the outcomes of these ideas.

___12. The evaluation stage of the problem-solving process involves deciding on and developing a plan to solve the problem

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T, 11. T, 12. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 7 and 12 of Self Check 4.2 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

7. The first step in the problem-solving process is Problem Identification. A person identifies a problem when he acknowledges that a situation is affecting him and says that he wants/needs to change a situation or find out more about it.

12. The evaluation stage involves comparing the results of carrying out the plan with the goals that were identified.

Lesson 4 Quiz

Please read Lesson 4 two times before attempting its quiz. When you have finished reading this lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at www.CareCourses.com and open your course file to access the Online Quiz for this lesson.

Lesson 5

Stress Management Strategies

Learning Objectives

In Lesson 5 you will learn

- sources of stress
- signs of stress
- effects of stress
- ways to cope with stress
- sources of stress for children
- ways to avoid stress in the child care facility
- ways to help children cope with stress
- stress management resources for families

* * *

Those who have studied stress observe that:

- Some forms of stress are common to all, some are peculiar to certain cultures or socioeconomic groups, and some are unique to certain people.
- Each of us perceives and deals with stress differently, depending on our personalities, environments, and backgrounds.
- Mild stress can result in improved performance, but intense stress or long periods of mild stress can result in poor performance.
- Long-term stress generally causes frustration, confusion, and despair.
- Some stress, however, is necessary to our well-being.

Sources of Stress

The causes of stress are many and varied. They range from simple everyday occurrences to complex, life-changing events. Even joyful events, such as the birth of a child, a wedding, an anniversary, going to a party, or working hard to accomplish an enjoyable task produce stress. It is neither possible nor desirable to avoid stress.

Recognizing the sources of stress is a first step in learning to cope. In addition to stresses that are part of everyday life, teachers and other child care providers face many stressful situations in the course of a typical day at work. Interactions with the children in your care can be a source of stress. Relationships and interactions with parents, an employer or supervisor, and/or other staff members can cause stress. Your feelings, both those you acknowledge and those that remain unacknowledged, can be sources of stress.

Job-Related Stress

Many job-related factors contribute to stress in child care providers. Researchers C. Maslach and A. Pines have identified the following stress factors among child care staff:

- high staff:child ratios
- long working hours
- little vacation time
- few breaks
- lack of space
- little input in designing policies and structure of the program

Other researchers who surveyed teachers in two dozen New England child care programs identified the following major sources of job-related frustration: The six most frequently named sources of frustration are listed below in the order of how frequently each source was named.

Sources of Frustration among Child Care Teachers

1. Rate of pay
2. Prospects for advancement
3. Physical work environment
4. Style of supervision
5. Number of hours worked
6. Inflexible personnel policies

You will notice that the sources of frustration and stress named by these teachers are all things that are largely out of the teacher's control.

*C. Maslach and A. Pines, "The Burn-Out Syndrome in the Daycare Setting," *Child Care Quarterly,* 6(2) (1977), 100-113.

Stress Test

The **Stress Test** on the following page lists 43 major stress-causing events. Each event has a numeric value (column 2) representing the relative amount of stress it causes. For example, according to this scale, death of a spouse produces approximately twice the amount of stress as would a personal injury or illness, marriage, or being fired from work, and almost 10 times as much stress as committing a minor violation of the law.

Complete the Stress Test by checking each event which has happened in your life during the past 12 months; then calculate your total score. You will read a discussion of the probable significance of scores on this test later in this lesson.

Signs of Stress

People under stress send out certain predictable signals that can be physiological, behavioral, emotional, or cognitive.

Physiological signals

- Skin temperature changes (sweaty palms and cool, clammy skin)
- Heartbeat increases
- Muscles tense and hands tremble
- Stomach becomes upset (appetite fades, diarrhea may develop)
- Head feels light, faint

Behavioral signals

- Performance changes positively or negatively

Stress Test

Event	Value	Your Score
Death of spouse	100	____
Divorce	73	____
Marital Separation	65	____
Jail term	63	____
Death of close family member	63	____
Personal injury or illness	53	____
Marriage	50	____
Fired from work	47	____
Marital reconciliation	45	____
Retirement	45	____
Change in family member's health	44	____
Pregnancy	40	____
Sex difficulties	39	____
Addition to family	39	____
Business readjustment	39	____
Change in financial status	38	____
Death of close friend	37	____
Change to different line of work	36	____
Change in number of marital arguments	35	____
Mortgage or loan over $10,000	31	____
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	____
Change in work responsibilities	29	____
Son or daughter leaving home	29	____
Trouble with in-laws	29	____
Outstanding personal achievement	28	____
Spouse begins or stops work	26	____
Starting or finishing school	26	____
Change in living conditions	25	____
Revision of personal habits	24	____
Trouble with boss	23	____
Change in work hours, conditions	20	____
Change in residence	20	____
Change in schools	20	____
Change in recreational habits	19	____
Change in church activities	19	____
Change in social activities	18	____
Mortgage or loan under $10,000	17	____
Change in sleeping habits	16	____
Change in number of family gatherings	15	____
Change in eating habits	15	____
Vacation	13	____
Christmas season	12	____
Minor violation of the law	11	____
Total		_____

Smolensky, Jack. *A Guide to Child Growth and Development,* Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1977.

- Personality changes (may become more aggressive, more withdrawn, or confused)

Emotional signals

- Emotional reactions, positive or negative, intensify
- Emotions swing rapidly

Cognitive signals

- Judgment, perception, memory, and problem-solving ability may change—positively or negatively

Physiological, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive stress signals often influence each other. Symptoms can quickly snowball from mild signals to all-out alarms. For example, a child experiencing the stress of a new sibling may not send out obvious physical signals except for a tense, strained look or a clenched fist, but he may show strong emotional and behavioral changes such as jealousy or an inability to listen to directions. He may rage when another child interrupts his play or he may become withdrawn, eat less, and want to be babied.

Symptoms of Job Burnout

Some stressful events produce fairly immediate reactions. In other instances, an individual's level of stress may build gradually over a period of time. This is often the case for teachers and other child care providers. Recognition that job dissatisfactions are creating a debilitating level of stress is a positive sign. If child care workers who are stressed can find workable solutions they may not become victims of burnout.

Kay Albrecht, a senior partner in Child Care Management Associates who helped create HeartsHome Early Learning Center, Inc., in Houston, Texas, compiled the following list of behaviors that are clear signals of job dissatisfaction among child care workers.

- Increases in tardiness or absenteeism without prior notification
- Lack of attention to details such as where children's shoes and socks are located or what happened to the new manipulative toy
- Room arrangements that look just like they did last month or last year
- Defensive responses to feedback from peers, parents, or supervisors
- Changes in productivity levels as indicated by out-of-date curriculum plans or incomplete materials requests
- Lack of follow through in usual routines such as playground pickup, returning toys to central storage, etc.
- Cabinets whose contents fall on your head when the doors are opened

If you are a teacher or child care provider, be on the lookout for any signs of these behaviors in yourself. Take steps to eliminate stressful situations and learn effective stress management techniques before you become a victim of burnout.

Effects of Stress

Stress has a variety of side effects, both positive and negative. In general, a greater amount of stress will produce more intense side effects.

On the positive side, stress causes us to change—frequently for the better. And stress is built into important growth processes.

On the negative side, stress can be a source of conflict and pain. Chronic emotional stress can result in burnout. Burnout is most common in those professions that involve a great deal of contact with people. Burnout results in emotional and/or physical exhaustion as well as lowered job productivity.

The stress test printed earlier in this lesson has been used to predict the occurrence of physical and mental illness. As your score increases, so does your chance of becoming physically or mentally ill within the next two years.

Researchers have found that a low score on this stress test (less than 150) indicates a 37% chance of illness within the next two years. A medium-range score (150–300) increases the chance of illness to 50%, and a high score (over 300) increases the chance to 80%. These statistics do not mean that everyone who experiences stress will become ill. But the chance of illness increases as the level of stress increases.

Improving your skills for coping with stress can help to decrease your chance of ill effects.

Coping with Stress

People handle stress in different ways. Each individual's ability to cope with stress depends a lot on various personal characteristics, including

- how the individual feels about herself or himself;
- the level of stress;
- the individual's understanding of the sources of the stress; and
- the individual's understanding of her or his own reactions to stress.

Most people follow certain patterns in their behavior, including their responses to stress. For example, people who tend to be withdrawn will follow a withdrawal pattern in stressful situations. People tend to do whatever is most comfortable for them, but the most comfortable response is not always the best solution.

How individuals handle stress depends on their customary behavior patterns and on how they perceive the immediate stress. Because of individual differences in patterns and perceptions, a given problem may be impossible for one person to resolve but easy for another. Even those who resolve problems fairly quickly have a breaking point. Too many stresses, a serious crisis, or too much anxiety can cause one to act in an irrational way.

Individuals' ability to solve stressful problems also depends on the resources available to them. For example, a young mother who is deserted by her husband may not be able to find employment until she gets job training.

If stress is too intense, or too long lasting, harmful consequences may occur. When multiple stresses build up or when a person has developed a nega-

tive pattern in dealing with stress, the chances of lasting harm to the person or the person's family increase.

Some Common Reactions to Stress

Some reactions to stress are good. Some are good for a while, although if used too long can become harmful. These latter reactions, or adaptations, are called *defense mechanisms*. They defend against threatening feelings, and they can be effective for a while. Prolonged or extreme negative reactions to stress may indicate the need for professional help.

The following are some of the more common responses to stress (in alphabetical order):

Compensation: Circumstances or disabilities prevent a person from doing something, so other activities or ideas are substituted.

Daydreaming: The mind wanders freely from one thing to another in an effort to escape from unpleasant situations.

Displacement: When faced with problems or frustrations and unable to find solutions, the frustrations are transferred to someone or something else.

Fixation: A personality develops to a certain point and then stops or "fixes" there.

Identification: A person associates his or her own identity with that of another person who is greatly admired.

Projection: Someone else is blamed for one's own mistakes or shortcomings. Projection is a denial of reality and a disowning of certain behaviors or characteristics.

Rationalization: A person makes up acceptable reasons to justify behavior.

Reaction Formation: A person does the opposite of what he or she really feels like doing, and does it to the extreme.

Regression: A person temporarily returns to an earlier form of behavior, such as the behavior of childhood.

Repression: A person pushes back or buries unacceptable thoughts or feelings in the subconscious.

Scapegoating: A person blames someone or a group for an unfavorable situation.

Suppression: A person consciously controls behavior by holding back thoughts or feelings.

When an individual or family cannot resolve normal, daily stresses or more serious conflicts in their lives, they begin to develop multiple problems. As these problems become more numerous, the degree and amount of stress increase.

Successful stress management requires

- identifying the problem,
- developing a plan of action, and
- working to resolve the problem in the best interests of all concerned.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies can be divided into four basic categories:

- Immediate and Personal
- Long-Term and Personal
- Immediate and Environmental/ Societal
- Long-Term and Environmental/ Societal

Immediate–Personal Strategies

The goal of immediate and personal stress management strategies is to maintain or regain control over the individual's physical and psychological well-being in the immediate circumstances by utilizing the individual's inner resources. Effective immediate–personal strategies to overcome tension and stress include

- correct breathing;
- deep muscle relaxation;
- utilizing the imagination;
- utilizing cognitive powers.

Individuals may have other activities that they personally find relaxing, such as participation in a sport, eating, alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. While physical exercise has many positive benefits, eating to relieve stress as well as the use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs are harmful practices that create their own additional problems.

Long-Term–Personal Strategies

The goal of long-term–personal stress management strategies is to prevent stress and burnout by developing personal resources that can function as buffers to shield the individual from the negative effects of stress.

Effective long-term–personal strategies include

- Maintaining a healthy body through a sensible diet, adequate sleep, and regular exercise.
- Developing a high sense of awareness of your own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values.
- Developing a variety of interests, activities, and personal relationships.
- Finding a balance between work, leisure, and personal relationships.
- Developing a religious or philosophical outlook that gives perspective and purpose to the fundamental dimensions of your life.
- Developing a sense of humor about life and the ability to laugh at yourself and with others.

Immediate–Environmental/Societal Strategies

The goal of immediate–environmental/ societal stress management strategies is to remove the source of stress. To do this, the source of stress must first be identified. Many times, this action alone can remove the feeling of stress and allow the individual to set about solving the problem.

An example of this strategy is when a teacher takes a child who is demanding special attention and does an activity with the child. In this case, the teacher has identified the source of stress and is thus able to solve the problem. Specifically, a child is becoming disruptive because a legitimate need is not being met. Left unmet, the child's need for attention could result in more extreme misbehavior and excessive stress for the teacher, the child, and the rest of the group.

Long-Term–Environmental/Societal Strategies

The goal of long-term–environmental/societal stress management strategies is also to prevent or manage stress. This goal may be achieved by eliminating the source of the stress or creating a new environment that is free of the elements that produce stress.

As with immediate–environmental/societal stress management strategies, the source of the stress must first be identified before preventive action can be taken.

Examples of long-term–environmental/societal stress management strategies include the following:

- Mrs. A starts her day in a state of stress because she arrives at her classroom only moments before the parents begin dropping off the children.
  Mrs. A can prevent this stressful situation by organizing her morning so that she arrives at work a little earlier.
- The toddlers in Jennifer's group love to push wheeled toys, but there are more children than wheeled push toys. The teachers spend much of their time trying to redirect frustrated, unhappy children to other activities, but this is producing an increasingly unpleasant level of stress.
  The solution here is easy. Provide enough wheeled push toys (or whatever toy is appropriate for a particular group's developmental needs) so that all children who want to use this equipment can do so without a stressful wait.
- Child care workers provide one of society's most valuable services, yet their rate of pay does not reflect either the value or the difficulty of their job.
  The solution to this very real source of stress is not at all easy. It involves making changes in the attitudes and values of our society as a whole.

Recipe for Dealing with Stress

- Respond to it. The amount and degree of anxiety experienced will depend upon the situation.
- Pin-point the cause of the stress and the effect the stress has on all concerned.
- Develop solutions for resolving the stressful situation.
- Select the best solution to relieve the stress.
- Carry out the chosen solution. It may be necessary to select another solution if the first is not effective.
- Master the stress in a reasonable way, which involves taking into account the needs of all concerned.

Prevent Stress and Burnout

Most teachers and other child care workers are initially drawn to this work because of their love for children. And, as we noted earlier in this lesson, much of teachers' job-related frustration arises from situations that are beyond the teacher's control. Stress is bound to occur, but there *are* things teachers can do. This section presents some suggestions to help teachers work through the stresses and maintain joy in their work.

Communicate with Supervisors and Co-Workers

Some job-related stress is the result of misunderstandings between staff and administrators. Staff members operate from a different point of view than administrators. The teacher's responsibility is to focus on the individual classroom. Teachers must be sensitive to what is going on with each child in their care, the wishes and concerns voiced by the parents who they see daily, and the other staff members with whom they work.

Directors and other administrators, on the other hand, are responsible for the program as a whole. They must focus on the big picture—the policies and procedures that define the center and keep it in business and the ways in which the center's policies and procedures affect all of the children, families, and teachers in the entire center.

Many potential problems may be avoided if staff members and administrators communicate openly, honestly, and in a spirit of good will about center policies and procedures.

Be enthusiastic about your work with children.

Earlier in this lesson we cited a survey of New England child care workers that identified major sources of frustration in the teachers' work. The same study also identified major sources of satisfaction among these teachers. These are listed below in the order of how frequently the various sources were named.

Sources of Satisfaction

1. Observing progress in children
2. Relationships with children
3. Challenge of the work
4. Pride in performing a service
5. Relationships with parents
6. Recognition shown by staff

Focus your attention on the value and joy of working with children. Where else can a person develop their own creativity while enjoying the creativity and wonder of children? By concentrating on the positive aspects of your work and on things over which you *do* have some control, you can maximize your job satisfaction and maintain your enthusiasm.

Plan new activities for the children. Introduce new projects. Follow children's natural interests and curiosity. Make your days with children exciting both for them and for yourself.

Be supportive of your co-workers and you will likely be rewarded with friendly recognition in return.

Don't be afraid of failure.

Fear of making a mistake or not doing a project correctly keeps many teachers from trying new and innovative things in their early childhood programs—programs that can help maintain the

teachers' enthusiasm and make the days more fun for the children as well.

Marjorie loved working with young children, but lately she had become rather bored, and the children also seemed more restless than usual.

When it was time for her annual training, Marjorie took a course on organizing her early childhood classroom around learning centers. All of the ideas sounded exciting to her, and she felt certain that the children would find them exciting, also. But Marjorie had never used learning centers before, and she wasn't sure she could "do it right."

Weeks went by, and day by day Marjorie became more and more aware of the children's lack of interest in the prepared curriculum materials that she had been using. "I shouldn't be surprised," she thought to herself. She didn't find the materials exciting, so why should the children?

So one weekend, Marjorie enlisted the help of her sister and her cousin and together they did a complete overhaul of Marjorie's room. By the end of the weekend all three were exhausted, and Marjorie's excitement was at an all-time high. She could scarcely wait until Monday morning to see the children's reaction to the new arrangement.

The children's reaction did not disappoint Marjorie. "And to think," she said to herself at the end of the day, "fear of failure almost stopped me from even trying this."

Don't be threatened by what you might not know.

Pride in one's ability to do a job well is a positive thing. Pride that causes a person to feel threatened that they may not know everything they are supposed to know is harmful and can be a cause of stress. Pride that says, "If I'm good, I don't need training. So, even if I admit to myself that there might be something I need to learn, I certainly could never admit that to anyone else" or "I'd surely like to know how Sarah keeps the children in her group so happy and cooperative. I couldn't possibly ask her, though. How would that look? I've been teaching longer than she has" can prevent teachers from learning and growing. Such a sense of pride can keep teachers from seeking help when help is needed. And it can contribute to frustration and burnout.

Don't let pride prevent you from seeking help when you need it.

Acknowledge Your Feelings

Relationships with difficult children (or parents) can be a major source of stress. You can begin to disarm this stress by facing your feelings openly and honestly.

When you are unaware of your feelings toward a child (or parent), these feelings govern your actions, and you will not be able to work as well with the child. Your relationship with the child (or parent) is likely to deteriorate further, and your stress level is likely to soar.

Acknowledging your feelings and deciding what to do about them will free you to help the child and also alleviate much of the stress associated with those feelings.

- Examine your feelings.
- Recognize how you feel.
- Select an honest and positive course of action rather than simply reacting.

Don't feel disappointed or frustrated with yourself when you don't always do what's right. Most people learn from their mistakes.

What is important is to learn to listen to yourself as well as to the children and parents. Listen to what you say and observe what you do. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were the parent. How would you feel if you were the child? How would you feel if a parent or child said or did that to you? What do your actions really say?

Children can't understand mixed messages, such as hearing a calm voice but feeling a squeezed arm. It is better to tell a child when you are upset. By saying, "I'm really upset with what you are doing. I will not let anyone tear up your paper, and I cannot let you tear up theirs," you convey a more accurate and effective message.

With experience and practice you can learn to deal with difficult times effectively.

Self Check 5.1. True/False

___ 1. Everyone experiences stress.

___ 2. Stress has both positive and negative effects.

___ 3. Some forms of stress are unique to certain people.

___ 4. Everyone reacts to stress in about the same way.

___ 5. Long-term stress almost always results in improved performance.

___ 6. Under stress, a person's emotions frequently intensify.

___ 7. A person under stress may exhibit a mixture of physiological, emotional, behavioral, and/or cognitive stress signals.

___ 8. Changes in skin temperature and heartbeat rate are physiological signals of stress.

___ 9. A negative change in performance is a cognitive signal of stress.

___10. Changes in judgment, perception, and problem-solving ability are emotional signals of stress.

___11. A person who has good problem-solving abilities usually does not experience stress.

___12. People with few resources available to them have more trouble dealing with stress.

___13. The primary sources of both satisfaction and job-related stress among child care workers are things that are largely beyond the person's control.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. F, 5. F, 6. T, 7. T, 8. T, 9. F, 10. F, 11. F, 12. T, 13.T)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

Items 4, 5, 9, 10 and 11 of Self Check 5.1 are false. Please review the following correct statements.

4. Each of us perceives and deals with stress differently, depending on our personalities, environments, and backgrounds.

5. Long-term stress generally causes frustration, confusion, and despair.

9. A negative change in performance is a Behavioral signal of stress.

10. Changes in judgment, perception, and problem-solving ability are Cognitive signals of stress.

11. Even those who resolve problems fairly quickly can suffer the consequences of having too many stresses and exhibit irrational behavior.

* * *

Children and Stress

Sources of Stress for Children

Children also experience stress from a variety of sources. Sometimes sources of children's stress are obvious to adults and sometimes they are not so obvious. Adults who are experiencing their own stress may be too overloaded to take notice of events and situations that cause stress in children. Among the sources of stress in children are

- natural and normal changes that children experience or perceive within themselves as they grow and develop;
- new situations;
- inappropriate expectations from adults;
- uncertainty that comes from adults' mixed messages;
- relationships with other children;
- changes in routines in the child care facility;
- chaos in the child care facility;
- relationships with caregivers;
- negative disciplinary measures;
- loneliness;
- overstimulation;
- boredom;
- fear;
- frustration;
- change within the child's family;
- relationships with parents and/or other family members;
- conflict between adults in the child's life;
- adults' reactions to stress;
- events that the child doesn't accurately or fully understand;
- death of a family member or someone else to whom the child is close;
- disasters and traumas.

Signs of Stress in Children

Recognizing children's symptoms of stress is not always easy. Children's reactions to stress may include the following:

Conduct disturbances

Hyperalertness

Dependent behaviors

Regression, such as thumb sucking

Excessive attachment behaviors—clinging to parents or teachers and worrying about their parents' whereabouts

Sudden and extreme mood changes

Sleep disorders

Feeling vulnerable

Obsession about the source of the stress

Persistent thoughts of trauma

Avoidance of whatever caused the stress (or situations or events similar to the cause of the stress)

Belief that something else bad will happen

Time distortion

To help determine whether a child has a problem, ask the following four questions:

1. ***Is the child's growth and behavior appropriate for him?***

To answer this question, you must have a good understanding of the individual child since each child grows and develops at his own rate. Understanding an individual child means observing and knowing his development, background, and personality.

2. ***Does the child's growth and behavior match those of most of the other children her age?***

Use your knowledge of children's normal development, including ranges of behavior and physical characteristics for different ages, to help you know when to become concerned. For example, between 8 and 9 months of age and again during the toddler period, children typically experience anxiety when they are separated from their parents. By knowing the stages of childhood development, you identify and prevent stress.

3. ***Has there been a major change in the child's behavior?***

If so, how long have you noticed a difference in the child? A major change in a child's behavior is a signal of possible stress. A happy, cooperative child who begins to cry easily and refuses to play cooperatively is a possible stress signal.

4. ***Does the child's behavior fit the circumstances?***

Does the child overreact, under react, or behave in a strange way? When children are under extreme stress, they are likely to behave peculiarly.

These four questions can help teachers and other child care providers recognize some of the patterns of stress in young children. No single pattern means a child needs special help, but a change in pattern should alert the teacher to observe a child more closely. Keep notes on a child to have objective and detailed information on his or her behavior or physical condition. In observing, think about children's

- relationship to their environment and their other life experiences;
- age (stage of development);
- relationship with adults;
- ability to understand what is happening to them.

Tackling the unknown always involves anxiety, even when the final outcome is pleasurable. A child learning to walk

often is frustrated and anxious, but when he takes that first step, he is joyful. A school-age girl feels the pressure to excel on her baseball team, but when she finally smacks a long base hit, she feels proud of her accomplishment and builds her self-esteem.

Helping Children Cope with Stress

As with adults, children's reactions to stress follow certain patterns. Children tend to do whatever is most comfortable for them. Children who occasionally suck their thumbs will suck their thumbs more when under stress, and active children generally become more active when under stress. Of course, the response that the individual child finds most comfortable is not always the most beneficial way for the child to cope with stress.

Following are some suggestions for helping children cope with stress:

- Listen attentively when children want to talk about what is troubling them.
- Be sensitive to children's individual reactions to stress.
- Be tolerant of children's strong emotions and behavior disturbances.
- Acknowledge your own feelings about the stressful event.
- Model appropriate coping strategies. Children learn stress management skills best from observing role models.
- Talk with children about the stressful event in terms that the child can understand.

Parents and Stress

Sources of Parents' Stress

Parents are subject to the same stresses of everyday life as everyone else. Some of the most common sources of stress that parents face include

- worries about money,
- problems with their job,
- personal or family problems,
- time pressures,
- feelings of inadequacy,
- loss of hope,
- loss of self-confidence,
- guilt about the amount of time they can spend with their child.

Any one of these problems can produce serious stress and anxiety. Parents who are experiencing more than one problem may find their level of stress overwhelming. People experiencing excessive stress and anxiety often feel a loss of power or control over their lives, and this feeling adds to their level of stress.

In addition, the stresses of caring for young children can cause parents (as well as other caregivers) to become upset, angry, or frustrated. Caring for young children is hard, tiring work. Sometimes, especially when the adult is overly tired or frustrated, caring for young children may feel like very unrewarding work. The frustrated adult may think, "No matter what I do, no matter how hard I try, I can't calm this child."

For many and varied reasons, some parents are not able to give their children the care they need. This produces additional stresses for parents. Caregivers should be as sensitive to the needs of the parents as they are to the children's needs. Remember that a child's parents are the most significant people in the child's world.

Signs of Stress in Parents

Caregivers are better able to offer support to families if they can recognize the parents' stress.

Following are some indications of excessive stress in parents.

Disorganized Behavior

Disorganized behavior on the part of parents can signal excessive stress. For example, the parents may

- frequently forget important things;
- repeatedly arrive late;
- bring the child to the child care facility improperly clothed or unfed.

Frustration

Signs of frustration in parents' behavior can indicate excessive stress.

- Parents come and go with a worried expression on their faces.
- Parents scold and rush a child who is slow or threaten punishment.
- Parents may express a lack of confidence about how to handle simple child-rearing problems.
- Parents may seem confused about their child's behavior and what to do about it.

Inability to Accept Help

Parents who are experiencing excessive stress may be unable to accept help. Parents may be disturbed by a sense of failure or guilt because they can't cope with the source of their stress. Hearing their child's caregiver tell them how their child is feeling or behaving could cause a distressed parent to be verbally aggressive or to walk away and refuse to listen.

Concerned More about Self than Child

Parents who are experiencing excessive stress may appear concerned more for themselves than for their child. When the caregiver talks with parents about their child's behavior, the parents may begin talking about their problems and refuse to talk about the child. When they do talk about the child, they often show little understanding of the child's needs.

Parents who demonstrate one or more of the above characteristics may be experiencing excessive stress and are likely to need help. Sympathetic understanding and a place for their children to be while the parents work out their stress are important in helping them regain their balance.

When parents have an overload of stress in their lives and are unable to handle their problems, they may take their stress out on their children. These parents may lash out at their children in times of extreme frustration or rage and then feel guilty and remorseful afterwards.

It is quite natural for teachers and other child care providers to feel hostility toward parents who abuse their children. An understanding of the connection between excessive stress and child abuse may help teachers be more supportive of parents who are struggling to overcome their problems and learn new ways to interact with their children. It is also important to remember that not all parents who experience extreme stress become abusive.

Teachers and other child care providers can help parents first by not being judgmental and second by referring them to appropriate community resources. Your supportive attitude and behavior is helpful to the child as well as the parents.

Help Parents Cope with Stress

Parents often look to their child's professional caregiver for ideas when dealing with problems relating to their child. While caregivers cannot solve parents' stress, they can often offer information to help parents cope more effectively.

Caring for a Fussy Child

When caring for an unhappy or difficult child, the first thing that the parent or other caregiver must remember is that *the fussy baby or young child is not deliberately trying to cause pain for the adult.* Don't take the baby's crying personally. The child is a person who has a problem but no solution. If the adult feels frustrated, just think how much more frustration the child must be feeling! Crying is the only thing the child can do. (Sometimes a good cry can also help adults through their own difficult times!)

Adults must ***always*** control their temper when caring for children. Losing your temper for an instant is all it takes to do lasting damage.

Here are some suggestions to help adults take charge of their feelings. Share these ideas with the parents of infants and young children in your care. If you start to feel angry because of a child's crying or difficult behavior:

- Take some slow, deep breaths and count to 10 (or higher if necessary).
- Place the child in a crib on his back for a few minutes while you calm down and regain your self-control.
- Understand that the child is not trying to ruin your day. You are not a target.
- Understand that your job is to keep your cool and provide comfort and support for the child.
- Understand that you are not a failure if you are unable to immediately fix the child's problem. There may be nothing that anyone can do to stop a child's crying. In some cases, the best that anyone can do is to provide comfort and understanding.
- Talk with another adult about how you feel.
- Ask for help. Call another adult to assist you. Or call the **Parents Anonymous** 24-hour toll-free number — **1-855-427-2736**.

Referrals to Community Resources

Families may come to your center with various stresses and concerns. It sometimes takes an objective person to help guide them in the right direction for help or assistance.

Most communities have agencies that can help provide services to children, parents, and child care providers. Some support organizations are local and others may be branches of state agencies or national organizations.

Even small communities have agencies or programs in place. Some support services are often organized by local churches, such as food pantries. Small communities sometimes work with other area communities and pool their resources to provide for certain needs.

Most state universities have extension offices in each county. Smaller counties sometimes share with neighboring counties. Extension offices may be located at the county courthouse, but this is not always the case.

Your local courthouse may have a brochure on available agencies in your community. In most states, the local child care licensing office or the regional office of the state Department of Social/Human Services has resource brochures listing agencies by county. (The name of this agency varies from one state to another.) Get copies of whatever brochures are available for your area and keep these on hand at your child care facility.

You may also consult your local telephone directory for information on support agencies in your area. Look under

(1) the name of your county or state in the business pages or government section (examples: "Jackson, county of …" or "Wisconsin, state of …")

(2) the heading "Social Service Organization" in the yellow pages

Assignment

Compile a Directory of Local Services in which you list the support agencies in your area that provide help for families that are experiencing stress. Include the specific name, address, and telephone number of each agency along with a statement of the services provided by the agency. Keep your Directory of Local Services updated and handy so that you can access it when needed.

Examples of Resource Services and Agencies

Include the following resources in your Directory of Local Services plus any others that are available in your area.

Library

County Health Departments (WIC, immunization clinics, community action agency)

Local Organizations (such as Salvation Army, food pantries, Kinship/Big Brother-Big Sister, etc.)

Your county Social Services/Human Services office

Birth to 3 Early Intervention Program (inquire at your county Department of Social/Human Services)

Healthy Start Program (inquire at your county Department of Health)

Head Start

Extension office of your state

Assignment

In each of the following situations, list the agency or agencies to which you would refer the family. For most situations, there will be more than one agency that might be helpful to the family.

1. A child has been arriving without a warm coat. You discuss it with the parent. The reason the child doesn't have a warm coat is they don't have enough money to buy a new one.

2. A parent is concerned because her 18-month-old child is not walking yet. To whom can you refer the parent so the child can be evaluated?

3. A child is behind on his immunizations. The parent is a single father with no health insurance. He has told you he cannot afford the shots. What agency can help him with free shots?

4. A parent comes to you expressing concerns about her parenting abilities. Her 3-year-old child is very active. The child is up often during the night, so the parent is not getting much sleep. The child throws many temper tantrums because this behavior obtains his parent's attention. The child does not listen to the parent. The parent wants to be a good parent and do what is right, but she doesn't know what to do and is becoming frustrated. To what agency or agencies can you refer her?

Self Check 5.2. True/False

___ 1. Changes and uncertainties are sources of stress for young children.

___ 2. Conflict between adults in a child's life is a source of stress for children.

___ 3. Chaos in the child care facility is a source of stress in children.

___ 4. A sudden or extreme change in behavior or mood is a sign of stress in children.

___ 5. Sleep disturbances and dependent behaviors are signs of stress in young children.

___ 6. Children learn stress management skills best from observing adult role models.

___ 7. Caregivers should discourage children from talking about what stresses them.

___ 8. Caregivers should be sensitive to children's individual reactions to stress.

___ 9. A child's parents are the most significant people in the child's world.

___10. Sometimes parents' extreme stress can lead to child abuse or neglect.

___11. To best help the children in their care, caregivers must be as sensitive to the needs of parents as they are to the children's needs.

___12. Parents who are experiencing excessive stress are almost always willing to accept help.

(1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. T, 7. F, 8. T, 9. T, 10. T. 11. T, 12. F)

Correct Answers for False Self Check Items

7. When children want to talk about what is troubling them, caregivers should listen attentively and encourage children to acknowledge their feelings about the stressful event.

12. Parents who are experiencing excessive stress may be unable to accept help. Parents may be disturbed by a sense of failure or guilt because they cannot cope with the source of their stress.

Lesson 5 Quiz

Please read Lesson 5 two times before attempting its quiz. When you have finished reading this lesson, return to **My Courses** within your Account at www.CareCourses.com and open your course file to access the Online Quiz for this lesson and instructions for submitting your answers for grading.