Part 1

Foundations of the Teaching–Learning Process

THE ROLE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

Part 1 was written for two purposes: to give background and theory to students going into early childhood education and to act as a mini-crash course on how to work with children when you're in an introductory class and taking a practicum or field experience course at the same time. Because this is an introductory text and presumably the first class students take, the professors who reviewed the manuscript wanted to see background material in the first chapter. So if you're reading this sequentially, you start out with some history, theory, and an idea about early childhood education as a profession. That's fine if you have the luxury of studying the profession first before entering it. Many coming into the field, however, find themselves faced with a group of children from day one. Others are already working in the field before they take their first academic class. If you're in that situation, you can't dig into which theorist said what while two children are fighting over a toy in the corner. You need to know what to do!

Chapter 2 takes a big leap from the background material and theory in Chapter 1 straight to practice. The next five chapters focus on the vital skills that adults need to work effectively with young children. This is not the ordinary sequence of most introductory texts because it focuses so heavily on practice. Watch though how in each chapter practice is tied into the theory behind it. Theory may not show except where highlighted, but rest assured that theory lies behind practice on every page.

The chapters of Part 1 represent an unwritten curriculum, which is a contrast to Parts 2 and 3 where curriculum or plan for learning is spelled out in a more traditional way. Part 1 stresses the adult's role in planning or thinking things out and also

spontaneously in taking advantage of what happens. The goal in both cases is to enhance *all* children's learning in the various areas of development. When *all* is stressed in such a way, that assumes that the group includes diversity—either obvious or invisible. It also assumes that the diversity is not just in family background but also in ability. Children with disabilities and other special needs, identified or not, belong with their typically developing peers and this book recognizes that reality, and makes suggestions about how to respond individually and appropriately to each and every child.

The idea of an unwritten curriculum relates to the fact that children learn every minute of the day, whether adults are aware of it or not. When the adults don't pay attention to what

the children are learning the lessons may be detrimental. For example if you're not paying attention, those children in the block corner are learning that those who grab and hang on are the only ones who get the blocks they want. When you figure that out, you can work with them to help them learn to share and still get what they want to play with. If you're not careful other children may be learning that hitting works when other children won't give in—that is, as long as no adult notices. Sometimes children learn that loud crying is the only behavior that gets adult attention. Careful observation, reflection, and awareness can help you see that when adults notice, encourage, and intervene in ways that support positive behavior they make a difference in what children learn.

Most people know they should set good examples for children, but sometimes everyone isn't fully aware of the power of the modeling effect. Much of what children learn—desirable or not comes from imitating the powerful adults around them. When adults are aware of their own behaviors and consciously try to model ones they want the children to learn, that's unwritten curriculum. When you grab a child, roughly sit her down, and speak to her in a threatening voice, you are modeling aggression even though you may mean to just be correcting her. When you look every adult in the eye you talk to except the one parent you dislike, you are modeling dif-ferential behavior. If that adult happens to have darker skin than you, children will pick that up. It doesn't matter that your feelings may be to-tally unrelated to race, the children can easily pick up what then can eventually become racist behavior on their part. Modeling or setting ex-amples for children is usually a small part of most textbooks. In this book two whole chapters, Chapters 6 and 7, focus on what children learn from the behavior and attitudes of the adults around them. This is not only unwritten curricu-lum, but it's practically invisible besides. Yet modeling is a powerful teaching tool when used with awareness.

Unwritten curriculum doesn't exclude plan-ning. Planning and preparation are part of every-thing. Being responsive and spontaneous is important, but so is observing and reflecting in order to arrange the environment, supervise groups, interact with individuals, and be ready to make appropriate interventions when needed. That's why observation plays such an important part in the chapters of this first section. Even though the chapter on more formal records and assessment comes later, you are always observing and doing informal assessment whenever you are working with children. That's how you know when and how to interact with them.

So now you're ready to increase your knowl-edge of the foundations of early childhood edu-cation. Read on.

CHAPTER 1
Early Childhood Education as a Profession

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL DISCOVER

- what reflective thinking has to do with knowing yourself.
- how a multicultural perspective relates to a pluralistic goal.
- what the term "the whole child" means.
- what it means to be an early childhood professional and the legal responsibilities involved.
- why early childhood professionals need to know about "ages and stages."
- what is developmentally appropriate practice.
- which standard-setting early childhood organization is the world's largest.
- the history of early childhood education (ECE) and why you can't separate care and education.
- whether there is an answer to the "nature-nurture question."

It is said, "all you can ever teach is yourself." If that's true, why would anyone need a text like this? Indeed, early childhood education is a profession, and those who enter it must learn to speak the language of their chosen field. It's one of the things that binds early childhood educators together. The goal of this book is to give you the concepts and the vocabulary shared by the early childhood education community and to introduce you to the reality of the early childhood culture.

Four Themes in Early Childhood Teacher Training

This book carries four themes throughout that are important to the early childhood educator. One is **reflective thinking:** we have to examine our experience, both past and present, in order to understand it, learn from it, and grow. The second theme is **multiculturalism:** we must recognize, respect, and value the diversity that make up the "American people." The third theme is **holism:** early childhood education focuses on the "whole child" and fashions its curriculum accordingly to facilitate the teaching-learning process. The last theme is **professionalism:** early childhood educators are not glorified babysitters but rather professionals who are committed to the care and education of young children.

The Value of Reflective Thinking

If the statement "All you can ever teach is yourself" is true, ask yourself honestly, "How well do I know myself?" Now ask yourself, "How well do I know myself in relation to young children?" Even if you are a parent or have younger siblings, you still don't know *who* you are around children you're not related to. Working with other people's children is an experience that will teach you a lot about yourself: it will bring out hidden agendas, tucked-away feelings, forgotten experiences, and buried treasures. This book is designed to help you deal with the negatives as well as rejoice in the positives that come from working with young children.

As you read this book, keep in mind who you are—your gender, your race, your ethnicity, your culture, your family circumstances, and your background. You're not just a cardboard person interacting with cardboard children; you're a real person, bringing with you the sum total of your experiences. The children, too, have their own gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and family background issues that influence their interactions with you. The interface between adult and children is where the greatest learning takes place and constitutes what can be termed the "unwritten curriculum."

This book will deal with both written curriculum and unwritten curriculum. As you read it, you'll learn more about yourself, about early childhood education as a profession, and how to speak the language of the profession.

A Multicultural Perspective

This book takes a pluralistic view of the United States; that is, it recognizes, respects, and values the many cultures that make up the "American people." To

be truly pluralistic, this book must also recognize the so-called dominant culture as a culture and treat it as such—not as universal reality. When the dominant culture is not named as such, the insinuation (intended or not) is that the dominant culture is "normal" and that other cultures (Asian American, African American, and so on) are deviations from the norm. Although you may think of culture as food, customs, music, and holidays, culture is much more complex than just those outward trappings. Every facet of our lives is influenced by our culture, which affects everything we do, think, and feel. Culture can be broken down into a number of aspects or attributes as shown in *Focus on Diversity.*

I, Janet, author of this book, am an Anglo American married to a Mexican. I live in a multicultural, multiracial family through marriage and adoption. Members of my family have been challenged with a variety of disabilities. Although I have had plenty of exposure to diversity, I still have to work at seeing the world through various perspectives. Sometimes I fail to do so.

In this text, I often speak from my own experience in the first person to make this book as authentic as possible. We all know our own truth best, and although we must try to see other perspectives, we sometimes miss the mark. Yet the more we speak from an honest place within ourselves, the more we can share our perspectives with others and invite them to share theirs with us.

A Holistic Approach

The "whole child" is an important concept behind this text. Although we may sometimes focus on a child's mind, body, or feelings, we can't separate one part from the other. The child operates as a whole. We may plan an activity with intellectual objectives in mind, but we can't ever ignore how the child responds physically or emotionally.

Focus on Diversity

Aspects of Culture

Culture is much more than mere ethnicity or national origin. The term culture includes the way lives are influenced by race, gender, age, abilities and disabilities, language, social class, including status and economic level, education, religion and/or spiritual practice, geographical roots of the family, and present location as well. Sexuality, including sexual orientation is also part of the picture. We are who we are because of numerous influences and so are the children and families served by early care and education programs.

An integrated approach to curriculum allows both the teaching and learning processes to occur in a holistic way. This approach improves on merely watching the children, keeping them safe, and allowing them to play with whatever toys are present.

Furthermore, we cannot deal with the child out of context. The child comes to us from a family with a past and a future—a family that is part of a racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and socioeconomic group. We welcome not only the individual child into our early childhood classroom but also his or her family. And even when the family isn't present, we must remember that the family, which represents a larger context, is always part of the child's individual makeup.

In order to teach the whole child, early childhood education must offer a holistic curriculum. Rather than offer separate subjects taught at separate times, the teaching-learning process occurs in a holistic way throughout the day. For instance, a bread-making project that starts early in the day can weave in and out of the day's activities and even pick up again the next day. That one activity can encompass a variety of concepts and skills related to math, science, culture, feelings, eye-hand coordination, sensory development, social relationships, language, symbolic representation, and emergent literacy; it also teaches self-help skills and can be incorporated into the day's food plan.

Projects can flow from one to another—an approach called **emergent curriculum** (see Chapter 5). For example, a simple water-play activity involving a hose and a sandbox could lead to all sorts of projects, depending on the interest of the children and adults.

In one program, the children were frustrated when water disappeared instead of pooling in the sandbox. They ended up with an extended project of creating a "beach." It took days to dig out the sandbox, lay down a plastic tarp, and put the sand back in. When the children filled the sandbox with water this time, the water pooled at one end where the sand level was lower, and the other end became the beach. Taking the project a step further, the teacher documented the process through photos and words and encouraged the children to draw, dictate, and write about what they did, what happened, and how they felt about it. The documentation was displayed, which gave the project a past and helped the children conceive of future remodelings and related projects. The display also gave them much to talk about and informed the parents of their children's projects, thus bridging what has been called the "home-school gap."

This is just one example of how teachers can encourage a holistic view and create a continuity of learning. The goal of this approach is not to merely watch the children, keep them safe, and allow them to play with whatever toys are present; nor is it aimed at presenting children with a string of isolated, unconnected learning activities. Instead, curriculum is developed to provide continuity.

Curriculum is a broad concept. This whole book is about **curriculum,** or "a plan for learning." But note that the term "curriculum" covers everything that happens, whether the learning plan is obvious or not. While Parts 2 and 3 discuss the more structured aspects of curriculum in detail, Part 1 focuses more on what was termed earlier "unwritten curriculum."

Another aspect of this text's holistic approach is its treatment of a prosocial curriculum. Although there's no chapter devoted specifically to character and value education, that thread is woven through every chapter. Ideas are given throughout (not just in the guidance chapter) about how to guide children toward prosocial skills, attitudes, and behavior.

Professionalism

Perhaps it is clear by now that early childhood education is a profession, not just glorified babysitting. Early childhood education is a special branch of education that deals with children from birth to age eight. What children in this age category need is different from what older students need.

Early childhood educators combine care and education in many different kinds of programs, but they have general goals in common. They agree that early childhood is to be appreciated as a unique stage in the life cycle. They strive to educate the whole child, taking into consideration mind, body, and feelings. They create educational goals designed to help each child achieve his or her individual potential in the context of relationships. In addition, early childhood professionals recognize that the child cannot be separated from the social context, which includes family, culture, and society. They not only strive to understand and relate to children in context but also appreciate and support the ties that bind the child to his or her family.

Early childhood professionals look to the science of child development for their knowledge base about what children need and how they learn and develop;

they use research to distinguish science from myth. Those untrained in early childhood education may rely more on their own assumptions, background, experience, and bits of research. For example, many people still believe that a good hard spanking is effective in teaching a child to behave properly. The early childhood professional, however, knows that research indicates that harsh physical punishment creates hostile feelings and doesn't improve behavior.

Without a background in child development, some adults might expect a child to act much older than he or she is, so they might say to a very young child, "Don't cry! You're acting like a baby." Or they might expect a slightly older child to sit still and behave like mature students who have the ability to learn by listening. Early childhood professionals, however, are familiar with scientific evidence that shows what appropriate behavior expectations are for each developmental stage.

Ages and Stages. "Ages and stages" is a catch phrase that refers to particular sets of tasks and behaviors that are specific to different periods of child development. Usually, the stages correspond to particular ages, but not always. Developmental variation within an age group can be great. Some children take longer to get to and pass through each stage, and others move more quickly, but the stages tend to occur in an unvarying sequence. Cultural differences also play a role in defining expected behaviors at any given age. (See Chapter 11 for an in-depth discussion of stages.)

Physical milestones of development were introduced by Arnold Gesell (1880–1961) and were based on his research of children's behavior. Following Gesell's tradition, Benjamin Spock and T. Barry Brazelton have brought the concepts and the specifics of stage development to the attention of the general public. Many others have continued to research and standardize **ages and stages** norms, expanding on Gesell's rather narrow sample. There is general agreement about the major physical developmental milestones today. Many books describe the month-by-month development of babies and year-by-year development of older children. Later on in this chapter you'll also see how some prominent theorists viewed stages in terms of intellectual, emotional, and social development. (For more information about specific behaviors and skills expected at each stage and how to create goals for programs and checklists to evaluate behavior, see Chapter 12.)

Of course, stage norms should only be used as general guidelines. Children are individuals. And remember, research doesn't always have the final answer; it may not even be asking the right questions. Child care and education deal with cultural and value differences that research sometimes doesn't address. Nevertheless, as the cultural diversity of researchers more closely reflects the demographics of the population, we'll move closer to solving these kinds of problems.

Introduction to the Profession. Early childhood educators have professional organizations that guide and support them, help them make professional ties, and keep them abreast of current issues through the publication of journals. Two of the oldest and best-known organizations in the United States are The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Both orga-

nizations have long histories as advocates for children, their families, and education, and they continue to have substantial influence on improving the field. **ACEI** started in the late 1800s as a kindergarten organization but changed its name and expanded its focus to preschool and elementary school in the 1930s. Its work today includes publishing a journal and books on children from birth to early adolescence, and putting on international study conferences. **NAEYC** was originally the National Association for Nursery Education and took on its present name in 1966. A newer organization, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), was started by Marion Wright Edelman in 1982. The **CDF** is a lobby based in Washington, D.C., and its primary purpose is to advocate for children, particularly those in poverty and those of color. In 1996, the CDF drew national attention with a demonstration called "I Stand For Children"; people came from across the continent to stand in the nation's capital to shine a spotlight on children and their needs. The "Stand-for-Children" Campaign went local after this event. Today communities across the nation each create their own versions of "Stand for Children."

An organization called **Zero to Three** has established a National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families that emphasizes the care and education of the first three years, as does this book. With welfare reform in the 1990s, growing numbers of infants and toddlers are being cared for outside their families. That fact, along with some compelling research on the brain, which indicates that, as the slogan goes "the first three years last forever," Zero to Three has become an important supportive agency to the early childhood field. The organization provides such resources as conferences, training institutes, a journal, and a book publishing press to those concerned with children under the age of three.

The NAEYC is by far the largest and best-known early childhood education organization, and it has set standards for the field: it has created an accreditation process, which is administered through its National Academy of Early Childhood Programs; it has worked to upgrade pay and working standards for teachers; and, in the spirit of professionalism, the NAEYC has created a code of ethics to guide early childhood educators in their work and decision making.

The NAEYC advocates for young children and their families through its position papers, designed to influence government policies and early childhood education (E.C.E.) practices. For example, in November of 1996, when state governments were drafting their individual plans for child care in response to the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the NAEYC published its "Position Statement on State Implementation of 'Welfare Reform.'" The goal of the position paper was to help policymakers understand the importance of maximizing child care funds in order to expand the supply of qualified providers, set standards and oversee them, set payment rates that cover the cost of providing care, and ensure choices for families.[1]

Developmentally Appropriate Practice.   The best-selling and perhaps most important document to come out of the NAEYC is entitled *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs.* It was first published as a book in 1987 and has been called by some the "Green Bible." Although

the original document was deeply criticized because it left no room for cultural diversity, the revised edition (1997) took steps to correct that problem.[2] *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* is a statement about what the NAEYC and its members believe constitutes quality care and education for young children. The document is designed to guide professional decision making using the following three knowledge bases:

1. What is known about how children develop and learn, including information about ages and stages and what the appropriate experiences, materials, activities, and interactions for age and stage are
2. What is known about each individual child in the group
3. What is known about the social and cultural context in which each child is growing up

This document encourages moving away from "either-or thinking" to "both-and thinking" and stresses that each of the three knowledge bases is dynamic and changing. Sometimes what is age appropriate is not what is individually or culturally appropriate. With either-or thinking a choice must be made; **both-and thinking,** however, entails making a decision without disregarding any of the three knowledge bases. Sometimes that kind of decision making requires great creativity on the part of professionals, who have to look beyond their own perspective. The document makes it clear that early childhood educators must themselves be learners as they work with children and families.[3]

What kinds of conflicts might require both-and thinking? One common conflict is how to respond to both group needs and individual needs simultaneously. For instance, one child might need a morning nap at a time when the rest of the group is noisy and lively. An example of creative problem solving would be to find a quiet corner where the child can lie down.

Another kind of conflict involves diverse views of what children need such as when the child's home stresses dependence instead of independence. Again, both-and thinking is called for. Instead of telling the family they are wrong, the early childhood educator should try to understand their point of view. The family's cultural value may be to prolong dependence and to "baby" the child rather than to stress independence and teach self-help skills. The family may be teaching their child that it's more important to accept help from adults than to try to do things on his or her own. Such teaching represents a cultural goal that opposes a push for independence.

Under the new *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* guidelines, the early childhood educator can't simply discount this family's approach as being "developmentally inappropriate" and ignore their goals. This situation calls for discussion—lots of discussion—until the professional and family can see each other's point of view and come to some sort of agreement. (More will be said about goal conflicts as the book progresses.)

Types of Early Childhood Programs.   Various types of programs look to the NAEYC for leadership. Yet there are so many different early childhood education programs that they don't fit neatly into clear categories.

One way to classify programs is to distinguish between full-day programs and half-day programs; whereas full-day programs usually focus primarily on child care, half-day programs usually focus more on education. The true difference between these two types of programs, however, is the length of the day. Both types care for children, and both types educate them.

There used to be a false division in the field: some people distinguished between educational programs and child care programs. That division has disappeared with the rise of professionalism. You can't separate care from education, nor can you separate education from care.

Early childhood education programs can also be classified by where they are located—in homes or in centers. There are **center-based programs** and **family child care programs.** Family child care, though less regulated, is in the process of professionalizing itself.

A second kind of early childhood program that takes place in the home is a home-based visitor program, in which a professional or paraprofessional works with families of young children in their own homes. Home-based Head Start is the best-known program of this type, but there are other models.

Another type of early childhood education program is one that primarily serves children with special needs. But because more and more children with special needs are enrolling in other types of programs, we are starting to see fewer programs of this category. There is a growing realization that segregation robs our society of the unity it so desperately needs. Special education is the area of desegregation that the early childhood field needs to work on most. But changes are happening in this area. Today, for example, programs in the United States are bound by law to take any child who applies unless they can prove that they are not equipped to handle the special needs of a particular child. A program risks finding itself in court if it decides arbitrarily that it doesn't want to work with a particular family or if it rejects a child with special needs because it fears that working with the child would entail too much extra work.

Sponsorship is another way of categorizing early childhood programs. There are public-supported programs; private, nonprofit programs; and private, for-profit programs. An example of a public-supported program, **Head Start** is a comprehensive, federally funded program that since the mid-1960s has provided education, health screening, and social services to help low-income families give their children—from birth to five years of age—the start they need to succeed in public school. Some Early Head Start programs and other types of early intervention programs are examples of home visitor programs. There are also some state-supported versions of Head Start, as well as early childhood programs run by public schools. Numerous nonprofit programs—some sponsored by religious organizations—serve a variety of needs, but all are designed to provide either half-day or full-day care and education for young children. For-profit programs include both chains and independent businesses.

Employer-supported child care comes in many shapes and forms. This type of program may be run in a center built, owned, and operated by a company for its employees. In another program of this category, an employer may offer, as part of its benefits package, to pay a percentage of an employee's child care expenses— whether on site or away. Many employer-supported programs are run by child

Parent Involvement or Parents as Partners?

On the one hand: One program uses a parent involvement and education approach in which parents are required to put in so many hours doing various things for the center, either in the classroom during the week or on weekends, making repairs or doing yard work. They also attend classes designed to expand their knowledge of child development and improve their parenting skills through the use of positive parenting strategies

On the other hand: Another program considers parents as partners and puts the focus on looking for ways to create equality in the relationship. That means the staff or provider of such a program involves parents in big and little decisions about their child's care and education, including decisions about what and how their child will learn and how to best discipline and guide their child. Any parent education is designed to meet the specific needs of the particular parents enrolled.

care management corporations that assume the organizational, supervisory, and liability aspects of child care.

Programs for teen parents are often housed in high schools so the babies and their mothers are on the same campus. The babies are in child care, while the mothers go to classes. The program includes a parent education component along with the child care and other supports needed for young parents to finish high school while rearing babies.

A category that deserves special mention is the **parent cooperative preschool** sometimes called a "parent-participation nursery school." This type of program is designed primarily for parent education; parents are educated through the program, and they also serve as "co-teachers." Parent cooperatives, however, aren't the only programs with a goal of parent education. Most programs, in keeping with one of the principles of the early childhood profession, regard themselves as serving families, not just children. Parent education and/or involvement is almost always part of the philosophical statement or goals of most early childhood programs, although today more and more programs are aiming at a "parents-as-partners" approach. See *Points of View* for different views on what to do with parents. No matter what approach a program takes with parents, they have to keep parents informed about their child's daily life and progress in the program, they also have to increase the parents' understanding and appreciation of their child. Keeping the parent-child bond strong is an important part of the child care professional's job. Staff and providers have to remember at all times that the parents are the most important people in a child's life and they must work to ensure that the parents are aware of that fact.

The early childhood educator belongs to a group of professionals that has strong leadership, a proud history, a code of ethics, regulatory organizations,

and other professional attributes. "I'm not a babysitter" is the proud cry of early childhood educators, whether they work in child care programs, Head Start programs, parent cooperative preschools, enrichment programs for young children, public school programs, or other kinds of programs.

To become an early childhood professional, you will need education and training to provide you with the necessary skills, vocabulary, and concepts. But to enter the field of early childhood education, you will also need to know something about its history. Because history is an important part of being socialized into a profession, we will take a look at early childhood education's past in the following section.

Child-Development History

The field of science that studies how children change as they get older is called **child development.** Child-development researchers study all aspects of children, but most focus on specific areas, like how children develop thinking or social skills, for example. The extensive study of children during the twentieth century has yielded much information that has been useful in designing a variety of early childhood programs.

Historical Trends and Figures

If we go back in history, however, we find that child development is a relatively new area of study and that *childhood* as a concept was virtually unexplored until the eighteenth century; for example, in seventeenth-century Europe, children were treated as miniature adults. Over time, however, children have slowly come into their own, and child study has become an academic field.

The Nature-Nurture Question.   One of the key questions child-development researchers explore is, What causes children to turn out the way they do? The possible answers often fall in between or on either side of the **nature-nurture question:** Do children turn out the way they do because of their heredity, their genetic makeup (nature) or because of how they are raised, their environment (nurture)? Though some researchers today still lean one way or the other, most would agree that what counts is the interaction of genetics and environment. Development is a dynamic process in which nature influences nurture and vice versa.

The Question of the Basic Nature of the Child.   The nature-nurture question is a recurrent theme in child-development history. Another theme also involves a question that has been posed by philosophers and, more recently, researchers: What is the basic nature of the child?

The Church View: The Child Is Basically Evil.   Down through the ages, beliefs about the basic nature of the child have influenced how people thought about and treated children. The church, the highest authority in Western society

Experts have long debated whether heredity or environment determines the ways in which a child develops. Today, most agree that the interaction of both genetics and environment influence a child's development.

before the Renaissance, had its own theory about a child's basic nature. According to early church philosophy, each child carried the seed of evil as a result of being born in original sin, and only the strictest discipline would keep the child from becoming even more sinful.

Few child-development experts take such an extreme view today, but the idea is still around. Some believe the child's wild nature must be tamed, shaped, and molded. As the twig is bent, so grows the tree. Pruning is essential.

Locke and the Blank-Slate View.   The English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) was the first to write about the newborn as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*. He was the first to state that the child had no inborn ability to influence his or her own development, that only the environment could determine the outcome. Locke saw the child as a passive recipient of experience rather than someone with specific tendencies to think or behave one way or another. (A whole line of researchers called "behaviorists" have descended from this point of view. A little later in this chapter, we'll take a look at John Watson and B. F. Skinner, two of the best-known behaviorists.)

According to the blank-slate theory, the child is open to all kinds of learning—learning that will eventually mold that child into an adult capable of functioning successfully in society. Development comes from the home and parents, although all kinds of outside early experiences influence development too. The concept of the child as a blank slate places tremendous responsibility on those who are in a position to influence the child's development. Proponents of this view see both parents and educators as having the power to determine the

character, talents, and inclinations of the individual—even his or her happiness. Some still believe in this view—that the way a child turns out is purely a result of his or her environment, with innate ability having nothing to do with it. If children come out fine, parents and educators get the credit; if things don't work out, then they're to blame.

Rousseau and the Little-Angel View.   Some see children as pure and innocent beings with great individual potential that only needs to be unlocked. In this view, a baby is like a seed. Give a seed good soil, nutrients, water, sunshine, and fresh air, and nature will do the rest. So it is with a child. If his or her needs are met, the child will bloom without training, supervision, punishments, or rewards.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), a French philosopher, held this view. He believed babies were born with an inherent drive toward goodness that is vulnerable to corruption by adults. His view was very different from those who saw the child as evil or as a blank slate. Rather than constantly guiding or correcting children, Rousseau advocated allowing them to develop naturally, with a minimum of adult supervision. Rousseau believed that nature took care of development. The very word *development* means to unfold, which is how Rousseau saw the childhood process: a child unfolds the way a rosebud does. You can't pull the petals open; they will open by themselves, naturally.

Some preschools in the first half of the twentieth century and beyond were guided by this view of the child as being inherently good; they initiated a movement of open, or free, schools, which came to a climax in the sixties. Children were gathered into groups in natural settings and encouraged to explore and experiment with mud, water, sand, clay, and each other as media for education. Children were free to be outdoors, free to follow their own inclinations and interests without worries about objectives, accountability, productivity, or future academic demands.

So three historical trends lie behind early childhood theory today: the church's idea of original sin, Locke's emphasis on the environment, and Rousseau's belief in the natural process of development. These views of the basic nature of the child, as well as scientific research, still influence child-development theory today. To see an example of how these views influenced a group of early childhood educators look at *Focus on Diversity* on page 16. But that doesn't mean everyone agrees about everything. Disagreement occurs all the time among early childhood professionals who look to child-development theory to guide them in program design. In fact, current debate today centers around the inclusion of culturally diverse views in the study of child development—a field that historically has been dominated by the research of white male figures.

Child-Development Theorists and Their Theories

A succession of scientists have contributed to the study of the young child and to the theories that influence professionals today. The way we currently see, understand, and deal with children is greatly influenced by historical theoretical frameworks.

Differing Views on the "Nature of the Child"

At a staff retreat for small, church-affiliated preschool programs, a facilitator was brought in to do a discipline workshop. She started by talking about how each person has a personal view of "the nature of the child." She suggested that these views lie along a continuum. At one end is the seed image, which she related to Rousseau's view of the child as a "little angel." At the other end is the "little devil," which she related to the theory that a child is born in sin and only by the use of a "firm hand" will a child move toward a path of good behavior. Then she asked participants to arrange themselves along an imaginary line, placing themselves in the position that corresponded to their personal view of the nature of the child. Most of the staff arranged themselves at various points on the angel half of the continuum. Two people were the exception, however; one stood on the far end of the devil side, and one refused to place herself on the line at all. When asked to explain why they chose to stand where they did, most participants spoke of their varying degrees of faith in the innocence of children. The person on the "little devil" end of the continuum turned out to be a minister of the church and he spoke eloquently about the power of temptation. The facilitator noted that many of the staff were members of his congregation and wondered if their early childhood training had overridden their church's emphasis on people as sinners. The person who stood outside the line had a degree in psychology and spoke equally eloquently about how there was no "basic instinct" or "human nature." She believed that children were a product of their environment. After presenting the different views so visually, the facilitator was able then to talk about how the ways in which we discipline relate to what we believe about children, their nature, and their needs.

Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) journals of his own children marked the beginning of a scientific approach to child study. Later, G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924) took another scientific step forward by focusing on groups of children rather than on the individual child. Hall also kept anecdotal records on the developmental stages of young children.

Hall's student Arnold Gesell, who was mentioned earlier, continued with a systematic scientific study of developmental stages by filming a number of babies month after month to record the average age at which they rolled over, sat up, started to walk, and so on. From his careful studies, he came up with norms to create physical milestones of development.

Jean Piaget: Cognitive Theory.   Jean Piaget (1896–1980) was less interested in the physical milestones, like sitting up and walking, than in the cognitive milestones that mark developmental stages of intelligence. In fact, Piaget invented the concept of **cognitive stages.** He is considered one of the giants of child development and continues to have a strong influence on the field today.

Piaget spent his life studying how children think. He observed children and conducted clinical interviews for years, to determine how their minds develop rationality. According to Piaget's theory, children develop their reasoning abilities through interactions with people and the environment as they seek to understand the world and how it works. Though at first they explore only on very concrete levels, eventually children can begin to understand and explain things without physically trying them out each time. Piaget's final stage of cognitive development occurs when adolescents can use logic to talk about ideas.

Piaget was a **stage theorist:** he believed in the literal meaning of the term "development"; that is, that stages *unfold* through maturation. He described development as occurring in distinct steps that always fall in the same order. (Piaget's stages that are most pertinent to the early childhood educator—those covering children from birth through age eight—are laid out in Table 1.1.)

Piaget believed in putting children together in a rich environment and letting them interact in an exploratory way. He did not stress right answers, nor did he believe in molding and shaping through a system of rewards. You'll see Piaget's theory in practice throughout the book, but especially in Chapter 4, which focuses on the benefits of play and connections to learning and development.

Thanks to Piaget and others, young children are generally viewed as active learners. Those who follow Piaget's theory are adamant that children be allowed to have exploratory, firsthand experiences. Hands-on learning is more important than sitting and listening to a teacher.

According to Piaget, imaginative and pretend playing are also important to cognitive development; children create mental images through this kind of play, thus taking an early step in symbolic development. As a result, most early childhood programs have a dramatic play area, where children are encouraged to dress up and play pretend.

TABLE 1.1 JEAN PIAGET: STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT[4]

Age	Stage	Description
0–2	Sensorimotor	Children use their bodies and senses to understand the world. By the end of this stage, the infant has begun to use mental as well as physical activity to learn.
2–6	Preoperational	Children engage in pretend play and talk, which shows they are able to use symbolic thinking. Children's thinking still has limitations: it is egocentric and not always logical but based more on intuition and perception. They are still working out the difference between reality and fantasy.
7–11	Concrete operational	Children think in concrete terms. They can understand their world more objectively and rationally. They are able to classify and conserve.

TABLE 1.2 SIGMUND FREUD: PSYCHOSEXUAL STAGES[5]

Age	Stage	Description
0–1	Oral	The child's focus is on the pleasures and sensations of the mouth and area surrounding it. Feeding is a major source of pleasure and satisfaction.
1–3	Anal	The anus is the major focus of pleasures and sensations. Toilet training is a primary task of this stage.
3–6	Phallic	The genitals and their stimulation are the focus of pleasure. The Oedipus and Electra complexes are part of this stage.
7–11	Latency	Sexual needs are on hold, and pleasure is derived from a variety of activities.

Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson: Psychoanalytic and Psychosocial Theories. Rather than focus on the mind and its development, psychoanalytic theory focuses on feelings. The leaders in this field were Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Erik Erikson (1902–1994), both of whom were concerned with what's hidden deep in the psyche.

Sigmund Freud, the "Father of Psychology," studied troubled adults and came up with theories about how children develop in **psychosexual stages** (see Table 1.2, which shows the stages that cover the early childhood years). He believed that early experiences determine personality development and create specific outcomes. He also described how early experiences and feelings come out symbolically in children's play. In most early childhood programs, you can find children working out emotional issues through pretend play in psychoanalytic fashion. Little girls in the housekeeping corner who are playing doctor by giving each other shots with kitchen utensils are exploring their own experiences—trying on roles and playing out fears and anxieties.

Piaget would have looked at the same scene and said it demonstrates that the children are developing symbolic representation; they use one object to stand for another, showing that they have an image of the real object in their minds. Cognitive theory and psychoanalytic theory are two different ways of looking at the same behavior. But like Piaget, Freud was a stage theorist; that is, he believed that the psyche unfolds in successive stages.

Watch a newborn's mouth. It's constantly busy. The newborn period—the first year of life—is what Freud termed the "oral stage." Oral satisfaction is what newborns seek. It's not just the food in the stomach but the feelings in the mouth. Following the oral stage is what Freud termed the "anal stage"—a period in which toilet training is the main event and must be handled sensitively.

Erik Erikson was Freud's student, but he became an important early childhood theorist in his own right. Erikson rethought Freud's stages, calling his own viewpoint "psychosocial theory." Erikson saw the first year of life as the time babies develop a sense of basic trust. During this first **psychosocial stage,** they come to see the world as a safe and secure place when their needs are met,

Table 1.3   Erik Erikson: Psychosocial Stages[6]

Age	Stage	Description
0–1	Trust versus mistrust	Children come to trust the world if their needs are met and they are cared for in sensitive ways. Otherwise they see the world as a cold and hostile place and learn to mistrust it.
1–3	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	Children work at becoming independent in areas such as feeding and toileting. They can talk and assert themselves. If they don't learn some degree of self-sufficiency, they come to doubt their own abilities and feel shame.
3–6	Initiative versus guilt	Children thrust themselves into the world, trying new activities, exploring new directions. If their boundaries are too tight and they continually overstep them, they experience a sense of guilt about these inner urges that keep leading them into trouble.
7–10	Industry versus inferiority	Children learn competency and strive to be productive in a variety of areas. If they fail to learn new skills and feel productive, they are left with a sense of inferiority.

when someone consistently heeds their cries and feeds them; however, they come to see the world as cold and cruel when nobody seems to care. It isn't just what is done to them but also how it's done. Babies who seldom get loving treatment learn mistrust. In Erikson's view, the newborn period is followed by a stage of autonomy, when children learn to say no and protest. (Table 1.3 lists Erikson's stages of development that cover the early childhood years.)

John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner: Behaviorism and Learning Theory.
John B. Watson (1878–1958), an American psychologist and the "Father of Modern **Behaviorism,**" had another view of children. He believed that all behavior was learned and that training was the way to change it. In his theoretical view, waiting out a stage didn't make any sense.

Both Watson and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990), another famous behaviorist, believed that the only thing worth studying was that which can be seen and measured—outward behavior. They regarded as unimportant anything they couldn't see, including concepts like "mind" and "emotions." They rejected the idea of development unfolding in ages and stages, and they didn't believe in innate behavior or instincts. According to Watson and Skinner, all behavior is learned through the consequences of the individual's actions: a child will repeat behavior that is reinforced and cease behavior that is not reinforced. Adults who use rewards (reinforcement)—simple ones like acknowledgment or praise or complex ones like token economies—are influenced by **learning theory** based on behavioristic principles. Nevertheless, parents and teachers sometimes misunderstand the principles of behavioristic learning theory: simply by paying attention to negative behavior, even in the name of correcting it, adults in fact reinforce that behavior. According to behaviorists,

A star chart is a behaviorist tool for reinforcing desired behaviors—in this case the performance of chores at home.

it's better to pay attention to the behavior you *want* and ignore behavior you don't want.

Albert Bandura: Social Learning Theory.   Albert Bandura (1925–) is one of the researchers associated with a branch of behavioristic learning theory called **social learning theory,** which focuses on the significance of modeling and imitation in a child's development. In this view, children don't only learn by being reinforced; they also learn by watching others. Children tend to behave like the people in their lives, identifying with some and failing to identify with others.

Early childhood educators need to be constantly aware of their role as models for children. Taking this theory into practice, Chapters 6 and 7 directly focus on the implications of social learning theory for early childhood educators by discussing in detail how they are role models for children. It's quite a responsibility for adults, teachers, and parents alike, to set good examples and also counteract the models children see in the media, especially television. Adults can tell little boys not to be aggressive and little girls not to act helpless, but children are more apt to copy the models around them than to pay attention to words. "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work, no matter how often you say it, according to social learning theorists.

Lev Vygotsky: Social Context and the Construction of Meaning. Because social context is a significant concern of contemporary early childhood professionals, the **sociocultural theory** of Russian researcher Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) has experienced recent popularity. Vygotsky and Erik Erikson were both interested in the effect of culture on development. Like Erikson, Vygotsky believed in the influence of culture on childhood development, but Vygotsky was not a Freudian. His interest, like Piaget's, was cognitive development. Vygotsky believed, as did Piaget, that children *construct* knowledge—they don't just take it in. Vygotsky believed in the power of language and in social interaction as a vital ingredient in learning and development.

Unlike Piaget, however, Vygotsky didn't believe in letting children explore and experiment without adult help. Vygotsky was an advocate of what's called **scaffolding;** that is, providing learners with support and assistance. According to Vygotsky, assisted performance is fine—even desired. According to Piaget, children should be left alone to explore the environment and discover what they can do in it without adult help. See *Points of View* below for a look at how two different teachers put Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories into practice. Although the examples may seem extreme, they are based on real teachers, both of whom regard relationships with the children as a primary goal. They just have different ways of approaching the teaching/learning process. These two

Points of View
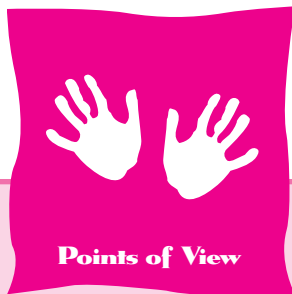
Hands Off or Hands On?

On the one hand: A teacher and her co-teacher, both well versed in Piaget, set up an interesting, challenging, developmentally appropriate classroom and then sit back and observe how the children use it. The two adults expect the children to explore, experiment, and discover for themselves what they can learn from all the rich materials, toys, books, and equipment available to them. Although they keep track of the children's learning and development, they don't direct it. They facilitate rather than teach. They intervene periodically when children need help and guidance.

On the other hand: Another teacher and his co-teacher in a different program introduce each material and piece of equipment to the children and teach them exactly how to use it. They work with the children individually and in small groups, observing what the children have learned and what they are ready to learn next. Based on this information they present activities and materials designed to always keep the children moving forward in their learning and development. They both teach and facilitate. They also encourage children who know how to do something to help children who don't have the same skills.

are in contrast to make a point, but it's important to acknowledge that many teachers have integrated Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories.

Here we have an example of how two theories—two different ideas about development and what children need—conflict with each other. Piaget was critical of educators who stressed right answers and hurried children toward a goal. In response to such educators, he might have said, "You're placing too much stress on getting things right and pushing children when they aren't ready." In contrast, Vygotsky might have argued, "Why wait when you can help a little?"

Theories! There are all kinds of theories. Whose theories are right? Whose theories are wrong? There is no clear-cut right or wrong when it comes to theories of early childhood education. Even though one theory may conflict with another, each has something to contribute to our understanding of children. Because no one theory covers everything, it is important for early childhood educators to take an eclectic approach—to pick and choose from different methods based on whatever theory fits the particular program issue, situation, or child at the time. Educated professionals have their favorite theories and lean toward some more than others, but no early childhood educator can afford to completely dismiss specific theories. Being an eclectic educator, one who is selective, is not a weakness, but a strength.

Pioneer Educators

The theorists just discussed contributed much to the field of early childhood education, but they were not primarily educators. This section will look at some well-known early childhood educators and the institutions they created.

One such educator was J. H. Pestalozzi (1746–1827), who started a school in Switzerland based on the principle that education should follow the child's nature. He believed that children learn through activity and sensory experiences, and he stressed an integrated curriculum.

Pestalozzi influenced Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), a German educator who became known as the "Father of Kindergarten" by creating that institution. Froebel brought play into education. He thought of young children as seeds and saw the educator's role as gardener. Hence, the name *kindergarten,* which in German means garden of children.

Maria Montessori (1870–1952), who was the first woman physician in Italy, is best-known as an educator. She created her own brand of education, which still survives under her name to this day. She emphasized the active involvement of children in the learning process and promoted the concept of a prepared environment. Child-sized furniture and specific kinds of self-correcting learning materials were two contributions of the **Montessori** program.

John Dewey (1858–1952), an American, created the progressive education movement. Like his forerunners, he also advocated experiential learning. He believed that curriculum should be built on the interests of the children and that subject matter should be integrated into those interests. From Dewey comes the term **child-centered curriculum.**

Focus on Diversity

Culturally Diverse Perspectives on Childhood

To honor diversity, this book ought to focus equally on childhood perspectives, histories, and trends that do not have European roots. By observing different cultures, we see that there are many ways to go about caring for and educating children. There's no one right way. It's important for all early childhood educators to understand the value of learning about diverse perspectives.

Unfortunately, information about non-Western childhood histories and trends isn't always easily accessible. Indeed, there are numerous historical descriptions of childhood, education, and family from various cultures, but it is beyond the scope of this book to cover each and every one. However, the *Focus on Diversity* box on pages 26 and 27 contains a reading list to allow you to further explore on your own. To whet your appetite, though, here are some tidbits about non-Western views of childhood and early education.

Historically, attitudes toward childhood in China and Japan were influenced by Confucius's writings (551–479 B.C.), which stressed harmony. Children were seen as good and worthy of respect, a view not held in Europe until more recently.

Native American writings show close ties and interconnectedness, not only among families and within tribes but also between people and nature. Teaching children about relationships and interconnections are historical themes of early education among many indigenous peoples. Closeness is a theme in Latino families, some of whom also have indigenous roots in North, Central, and South American soils. This theme is expressed by the title of a framework that Costanza Eggers-Pierola and others developed called *Connections and Commitments: A Latino-Based Framework for Early Childhood Educators*.[7]

Strong kinship networks are themes among both Africans and African Americans; people bond together and pool resources for the common good. Whether these contemporary tendencies come from ancient roots, historic and modern oppression, or all three remains unclear.

Not all variations in attitudes and child-rearing practices reflect cultural differences; they may also arise from family, societal, or historical circumstances. Poverty, oppression, and other kinds of adversity affect child-rearing practices and attitudes toward education. Among populations that experience high infant-mortality rates, child rearing has certain characteristics in common: Infants are on or near a caretaker's body day and night so they can be watched for signs of illness. Crying is quickly attended to because it may signal the onset of illness. In such societies, early education, as well as social and emotional relationships, is of less concern than survival issues.[8]

Dewey's ideas influenced educators in the United States and other countries. In fact, his approach influenced Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994), who founded the internationally acclaimed Reggio Emilia early-education system in Italy. Many components of this program are notable: cooperation and collaboration at all levels, an emergent curriculum combined with a project approach that picks up on and enhances children's interests, and the documentation of the learning process and the work the children do.

We have looked at the European roots of early childhood education, but history and trends from other cultural roots are also important. See *Focus on Diversity* on page 23 for a discussion of culturally diverse perspectives on childhood and *Focus on Diversity* on pages 26 and 27, which lists readings that explore the early childhood practices of various cultures.

Brain Research

One thing all theorists and pioneer educators have in common is the idea that the early years matter. What happens in those first years of life make a difference to the later outcomes. As Sigmund Freud is often quoted as saying, "The child is the father of the man." (He also meant to include women in that statement.) Until fairly recently studying the human brain didn't yield much information about its development, but new research using sophisticated technology lets us actually peek into living brains to see what's going on. Finally, the statement "the early years matter" has been validated by scientists in white coats who can show graphically that the idea has validity. All of a sudden people in high places who paid little attention to early childhood education are sitting up and taking notice. A massive research project captured in a book called, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development,*[9] has been looking at the piles of research and the implications for children, families, and communities.

Most people born in this country who read this book went to kindergarten. That's because the kindergarten movement in the last century grew out of the idea that first grade is too late to begin to think about children's learning and development. By the 1960s the **Head Start** movement as well as programs for children with special needs grew out of the realization that for some children, kindergarten was too late to begin addressing learning and development. Now the brain research makes it very clear that optimum development of the brain and therefore the whole child (including the cognitive part) depends on what happens right from birth (and even before). As a result we now have **Early Head Start** for infants, toddlers, and their families as well as a number of programs and resources for babies with special needs. That's also one of the reasons that infants and toddlers get so much attention in this book. Though many of you who plan to work with pre-kindergarten or older children may find it beside the point to read about babies, still you should be aware that the early care and education in the first year has a huge impact on how children are as 4, 5, 6, or 7 year olds. If you don't work with the youngest children, maybe you will at least become an advocate for quality programs for them aimed at healthy development and learning.

So what does the brain development research tell us? One of the tasks of the early years is for the brain cells to make connections with each other and create pathways. They do this by growing branches called **dendrites.** Babies are born with many more brain cells than they need, so the first years involve what some call "pruning." Whatever cells or connections aren't used disappear. "Use it or lose it" is a common expression stated by those who teach about the implications of the brain research. That doesn't mean sit infants down with flash cards in front of them! The message here is that infants and toddlers need the

Brain Development

What makes a difference to brain development are common sense things. For example, **attachment** counts. Infants and toddlers who have warm relationships that result in their feeling closely connected to someone or to several people are more likely to have optimal brain development than those who are shuffled around and feel constantly insecure. Even when there is attachment and especially if there is not, shielding babies from stress is vital. When violence is a part of family life, babies to whom violence is done can be stunted in their brain development. Even when babies witness violence done to others, the experience can have a negative effect. From a secure infancy and a safe toddlerhood come children whose brain development is such that they are curious, interested, motivated, and competent learners.

kinds of experiences that help them make the optimum number and right kinds of connections and pathways that result in healthy, wholesome development.

One of the most notable findings is how vitally connected social and emotional development is to learning and cognition. The approach must be infinitely broader and more developmentally appropriate than merely stimulating the infant or focusing on academics. In other words cognitive development builds on a foundation of social-emotional stability and security. That's the reason that this text dwells on relationships, connections, feelings, and the social-emotional environment. See the *Theory Behind the Practice* box above for more on how to support optimum brain development.

What It Means to Be a Professional

This introductory chapter began with an explanation of why the early childhood education student must learn the language of the profession and understand how the profession is organized and regulated. This final section takes a different slant on what it means to be part of the profession.

Early childhood educators know what it means to behave in a professional manner. They understand the importance of confidentiality. They never talk about one family to another or spread gossip. They have an attitude that shows they take their profession seriously. They are dedicated to working with children and families, using the skills and knowledge they have gained through preparation and training.

Early childhood professionals are lifelong learners. They continually pursue professional development and create professional goals for themselves, using on-the-job evaluations and feedback, as well as self-assessment, to determine future directions for learning.

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They understand and follow the requirements set by regulating agencies. They adhere to the adult-child ratios, group size, and space requirements determined to be minimum standards and realize that optimum standards are what they should strive for. (Size and space regulations will be discussed further in Chapter 8.)

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Early childhood professionals are aware of their legal responsibilities. For example, they understand the seriousness of child abuse and know they have a legal mandate to report any suspected cases.
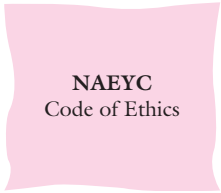
Here's a situation an early childhood professional might face: A four-year-old child arrives at school with an ugly bruise on his cheek. His baby sister has several small burn marks on one arm. "What happened to you?" the teacher asks the four-year-old. She then looks up at the mother, a timid woman with a new boyfriend, who gives an unlikely explanation and leaves quickly. The child later tells the teacher that "Uncle Bob" burned his sister with a cigarette and that when he tried to stop him the man shoved him hard against a wall.

The teacher is very upset, but she feels sorry for the mother. She knows that this boyfriend is important to her for emotional and financial reasons. She's afraid of what might happen if she reports the suspected abuse: the mother could lose her children, or they might all have to go back to living in her car like they used to. What can the teacher do? *She has no choice*. She cannot ignore the incident and hope things will get better. She can't just talk to the mother and hope that she'll get some help. *She must report the suspected abuse to the authorities.*

Teachers, aides, assistants, family care providers, caregivers, or any other adults who work with children and families are "mandated reporters"; that is, they are required by law to report suspected abuse. There are penalties for not doing so. The purpose of this law is to stop the violence committed against children—violence that every day results in injury, permanent disability, and even death.

CODE OF ETHICS

Early childhood educators have legal responsibilities to guide them in some of their decision making, but they aren't entirely on their own in handling non-legal matters. Because early childhood education is a profession, a code of ethics guides its members in decision making. The NAEYC publishes a document that outlines a set of shared values and commitments based on the collective wisdom of the profession.[10] The code of ethics is based on six core principles outlined in its preamble: "We have committed ourselves to

NAEYC
Code of Ethics

appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle,

basing our work with children on knowledge of child development,

appreciating and supporting the close ties between the child and family,

recognizing that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society,

respecting the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague), and

helping children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard."

The NAEYC code of ethics is designed to offer professional guidelines for working out ethical dilemmas. It lays out four areas of responsibility: to children, families, colleagues, and community and society.[11]

By now you can see that if you go into early childhood education, you will become part of a large community of professionals dedicated to the care and education of the whole child. By pursuing a career in early childhood education, you'll be joining a profession that has a past, a present, and a future. Welcome!

A STORY TO END WITH

It was on a January day long ago that I decided to go back to school. I had four children at the time, and the idea of college was far from my mind—until a flyer ended up in my hand. My life changed that day.

I was a busy woman. My oldest child was in kindergarten, my two middle children were three and four, and I had a new baby. I decided to en-roll my tots three mornings a week in a parent co-op preschool. I was obligated to help out at the preschool two mornings a week, but on Fridays I was free to do what I wanted while they were in school. On that first Friday, I was glad for the day off. On the second Friday, I realized I didn't want to leave the preschool world. And by the third Friday, I had discovered that a new

Head Start preschool that was opening in the same location was looking for volunteers. I signed up, and my career as a preschool volunteer was launched.

I became totally engrossed in early childhood education. While I was busy learning about the similarities and differences in the two programs I was involved in, I received a flyer announcing a community college class in early childhood education. At first, the idea of taking a class seemed ridiculous to me. I was a grown woman with four young children. What place did college have in my life? I hadn't been to school in years and couldn't even remember how to study. Besides, wouldn't

I look out of place in a class with eighteen-year-olds?

Nevertheless, I picked up the phone and registered. I arrived at the first class practically shaking in my shoes, but it didn't take long to feel right at home. There were other students my age, and the younger ones were plenty friendly.

Well that was the beginning of my career in early childhood education. My course work allowed me to move up the ladder from volunteer to assistant teacher. The more classes I took, the higher I went until, finally, I ended up as a community college teacher in the school where I started as a student.

SUMMARY

ONLINE RESOURCES
Go to **www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e** to access study resources and Web links related to this chapter.

Early childhood education is a special branch of education that deals with children from birth to eight years of age. There are four key themes in the training of early childhood educators: reflective thinking, multiculturalism, holism, and professionalism. Early childhood educators look to the science of child development for their knowledge base about what children need and how they learn and develop. As well, numerous professional organizations guide and support early childhood educators in the various types of programs they work in.

Child development is the study of how children change as they get older. Over the years, researchers in this field have devised theories that explore the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral development of children—theories that maintain their relevance in the field of early childhood education today. Taking the cue from these theorists, many educators have made contributions to early childhood education through the development of creative and innovative programs. Early childhood education is a profession—one that entails legal as well as ethical responsibilities—that is dedicated to children, families, colleagues, and society.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the question, "Who are you?" Write down a list of 10 words that you can use to define yourself. Look over that list and see if you can see any patterns. Does this list explain your identity? What would it take to explain your identity?

2. Did you attend any sort of early childhood care and education program before the age of five? If yes, what memories do you have of your experiences there (if any)? If no, what are one or two outstanding memories (if any) you have of those first five years.

3. Explain how nature and nurture interacted to create you as the person you are.

4. What draws you to a class in early childhood education?

Terms to Know

How many of the following words and acronyms can you use in a sentence?
Do you know what they mean?

reflective thinking   4
multiculturalism   4
holism   4
professionalism   4
emergent curriculum   6
curriculum   7
physical milestones of development   8
ages and stages   8
ACEI   9
NAEYC   9
CDF   9
Zero to Three   9
both-and thinking   10
center-based programs   11
family child care programs   11
Head Start   11, 24
parent cooperative preschool   12

child development   13
nature-nurture question   13
cognitive stages   16
stage theorist   17
psychosexual stages   18
psychosocial stages   18
behaviorism   19
learning theory   19
social learning theory   20
sociocultural theory   21
scaffolding   21
Montessori   22
child-centered curriculum   22
Early Head Start   24
dendrites   24
attachment   25

For Further Reading

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