

# PREFACE



This book is unique in many ways. It takes an unusual approach for an early childhood education introductory textbook. As an advocate for diversity, I tried to reconceptualize early care and education from different points of view. Diversity issues appear right away and are threaded throughout every chapter. Further, the perspective of students who are already working with children is addressed immediately and gives those students practical advice wedded to theory throughout the book. A goal is skill-building with a solid theoretical base. Though the book has many elements of a practical approach, everything is always based on sound theory, which is explained throughout. The aim is to address the needs of students who are with children while studying early childhood education—either as practicum students, staff in early care and education programs, or family child care providers.

Because of the practical aspects of this text, guidance strategies appear in more than just one chapter. Anyone working hands on with young children is anxious for ideas about how to manage out-of-bounds behavior. They can't wait half way through the course to get to a chapter on guidance. They need to know right away how to keep children safe and healthy.

Another unique feature is a whole chapter devoted only to caregiving routines. Why would those who work with children older than three need such a chapter? Physical care is important for anyone who works with young children of any age, especially when full inclusion is a goal and value. All early childhood professionals must know how to provide physical care in ways that promote relationships, learning, and development.

The fact that many aspects of this book are unconventional relates to my goal of trying to get everybody to think “outside of the box,” as the expression goes. For example, I'm taking a whole different track when I devote two chapters to adults modeling behavior for children. The purpose is to help readers see that when adults are focused outwardly on teaching children, they often ignore their own behavior and the unspoken messages it gives. That's why this text puts such an emphasis on modeling. To those who are used to a more traditional approach to early childhood education, those two chapters may feel confusing unless they read them with the idea that everything in those chapters relates to the subject of children picking up adult attitudes and behaviors.

The result of this unique approach is that ages and stages information is farther back and the familiar chapters about physical, cognitive, social-emotional domains have been reconstructed into new forms. Those using the book who

have a more traditional approach to early childhood education are challenged to open their minds and readjust their thinking so the organization makes sense to them. That's not to say that developmental information is minimized. One of the basic glues that holds our profession together is the general agreement about the value of developmental research. The Program Standards for the NAEYC Accreditation uses the word development 19 times in their 10 standards. The words we use show our values and our perspectives; the same is true for organizations. Developmental perspectives are important parts of this text, but they are not universal. Many people in the world have different ways of explaining why and how children grow and change. That fact doesn't invalidate NAEYC's standards, it just reminds us that respecting diversity means honoring multiple perspectives on even the most basic well-researched concepts, such as developmental patterns.

## THEMES OF THE BOOK

### Examples, Anecdotes, Scenarios

In this book students gain an overview of what goes on in early childhood programs, both up front and behind the scenes. Ideally, students should have many opportunities to watch master teachers on the job before they work directly with children; nevertheless, many students miss such opportunities to observe. To address this reality, the text uses anecdotes to transport readers to early childhood classrooms and family child care homes. Students “watch” how early educators effectively facilitate the teaching-learning process and handle all sorts of situations. These examples are designed to help readers put themselves in the educator's shoes, examine their own reactions, and anticipate how they might handle similar experiences.

### Parents-as-Partners Approach

The book emphasizes the importance of the partnership between parents and early childhood professionals. This topic is discussed in Part 1 rather than being treated as a postscript. Although early educators play a prominent role in the care and education of young children, they cannot ignore what parents want for their children. They must take into consideration the diverse backgrounds of the families that are a part of their programs, and they must work to clearly understand parental goals and values—both individual and cultural. What's at stake is children's identity formation and connections to their family. This emphasis on parents' goals and values reflects the vision of a pluralistic society—one in which diverse cultures exist side-by-side, with no one dominating the others. If this vision is to become reality, early childhood professionals must work to preserve home culture and to help children and parents understand and respect differences. This viewpoint is quite different from a “let's-study-diversity”

approach to multicultural curriculum. This book teaches students to use an *antibias* activist approach.

### Critical Thinking Skills

Because taking a diverse approach to early care and education is so complex, there is no formula for “correct” behavior in every situation. For that reason, this book encourages students to use critical thinking along with self reflection rather than looking for somebody else’s “right answer.” To do this, the text sometimes provides a particular viewpoint, but then asks students to use it as a backboard off of which they can bounce their own ideas. Following NAEYC’s advice in the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* book, students are urged to make decisions about what is best for each child and family based on child development principles as well as the child’s and family’s individual and cultural background.

### Reducing Violence in the Society

This book takes a stand on working toward violence reduction in our society. By modeling pro-social skills and alternative ways to resolve conflicts, early childhood educators equip young children with a good foundation for using nonviolent approaches to problem solving. Those skills can help children through difficult teen years and into adulthood. Of course, changing violence in our society isn’t simple. But if every early childhood educator were dedicated to teaching children—and parents—non-aggressive tactics for handling aggression, things would change.

### A Broad View of Early Care and Education

Reflecting the changing needs of today’s families, the focus covers a broader age range than the traditional preschool population of three- and four-year-olds. Although some students will work in half-day preschools, most students in the field will work in full-day early care and education programs, after school programs, kindergarten, or primary. For this reason, these students require comprehensive information about the needs of children from birth through age eight, including those with challenges, disabilities, and other special needs.

### Reader-Friendly Style

The text is easy to read but not patronizing. It explains theory in such practical ways that students can take sophisticated information in stride and understand its usefulness right away. The book talks directly *to* the student *from* the author, person-to-person. A feature of each chapter is *A Story to End With*, in which I share my own experiences as an early childhood practitioner.

## ORGANIZATION AND PROGRESSION

The book starts out traditionally with some history, theory, and information about early childhood education as a profession. Then it leaves background material and goes straight to how to supervise children in a program. Students who study and work at the same time can't dig into which theorist said what while two young children are fighting over a toy in the corner. They need to know how to respond! The next 5 chapters focus on the skills that adults need to work effectively with children. Though focused on practice, in each chapter practice is vitally tied into the theory behind it. The chapters of Part 1 can be thought of as unwritten curriculum that stresses the adult's role in both planning and spontaneity with the goal of enhancing *all* children's learning, including those with special needs. Unwritten curriculum includes the modeling effect as adults increase their awareness that children imitate them. Because biases show up in behavior and because children pick them up, antibias approaches are included in Part 1.

Unwritten curriculum includes planning, which depends on observation to be effective for arranging the environment, supervising groups, interacting with individuals and making appropriate interventions when needed. Students need to learn to do informal assessments on children, so they know when and how to interact with them effectively. Though the information on more formal records and assessments comes later, observing is a constant feature of Part 1.

The chapters in Part 2 focus on curriculum by first looking at the role that the environment plays in planning for learning in early childhood education. The environment is made up of the visible aspects such as the physical set up, including equipment and materials. There is also a less visible aspect of the environment related to the social, emotional, and cultural conditions present. Though this aspect of the environment is sometimes ignored, it is equally important to plan for nurturance, respect, protection, responsiveness, and cultural sensitivity. Those qualities of the social-emotional environment are foundational to development and learning according to brain development research. Culture and inclusion are two subjects that need special consideration when studying both the physical and social-emotional environment. They are also included in Part 2.

The information on developmental ages and stages is presented in Part 2. It is placed relatively far back in the book because I wanted students to observe children for a long time before looking through the lens of developmental stages so they don't get locked into stage theory and ignore diverse perspectives. Effective observation depends on looking at children with an open mind, rather than only through a developmental framework. At the end of Part 2 students are ready to learn about how to use observation for more formalized assessment. Because this is an introductory text, the focus is mostly on the kind of ongoing assessment that helps students plan and report on the kinds of experiences that relate to both individual needs and interests as well as those of the group.

Part 3 gives students a chance to look at curriculum in still another way and suggests that using commonly understood terms makes it easier to explain to

those outside the field. Further, using terms such as math, science, art, music, and social studies to explain the subject matter shows that early childhood curriculum is the foundation of courses taught in later grades. The cement of those foundations is the language and literacy that children gain in the years before language and literacy become formal subject matter. Language has always gotten a good deal of attention by early childhood educators. Now literacy has joined it as a subject of great interest. Literacy is interwoven in every aspect of the early curriculum.

Though Part 3 looks at curriculum in terms of traditional educational disciplines, students aren't taught to create "lessons" in math, science, language, literacy, art, music, or social studies. Rather they look for ways to provide children with first hand experiences with the subjects. Most programs use the environment as a teacher and the adults become facilitators of the teaching-learning process. The environment is usually set up with "centers" or areas equipped and organized so children can have hands-on, interactive experiences with materials, individually or in small groups. A program may also have a more formal approach to teaching something like math, such as addressing math concepts during small group activities or during circle time. Many programs have a "math table" with manipulative materials on it. Those obvious math activities however, should not take the focus off the mathematical opportunities of many other experiences that occur in the block corner, dramatic play area, play dough table, or sandbox. Though these areas were explored earlier as part of the physical environment in Part 2, they reappear in Part 3 as well.

No matter what the subject matter or the label, the curriculum is still holistic. Its holistic nature becomes a grand finale when the student is shown how to create a topic web as one way to plan curriculum.

## NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

- **Expanded Focus on Cognition and Learning.** In previous editions cognition and learning wove through all the chapters. In this edition they are more clearly highlighted in each chapter so the students don't miss the fact that they are studying about how children think and learn. In addition the research on how the brain develops gives some specifics on what's needed for cognition to blossom.
- **Expanded Focus on Diversity.** Diversity information and examples have always been a major feature of this book. Sometimes they were so embedded that they barely showed. This edition adds new information and makes what was already there even more visible in increased number of Diversity boxes and additional headings.
- **Expanded Coverage of Children with Special Needs.** Coverage of children with challenges, disabilities, and other special needs is greater than before. It shows up in sections titled Focus on Inclusion with a

subtitle that pins down the subject as it relates to the chapter. Although issues and information around inclusion have been in the text from the beginning, inclusion takes an even more prominent place in this edition.

- **Keyed to the NAEYC Program Standards.** New this time are key standards integrated into the text and a full-listing of the standards are on the inside front cover of the text. NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards developed for the accreditation process are now highlighted and integrated throughout. The standards correspond to NAEYC’s description of how early childhood programs consistently promote positive learning and developmental outcomes for all young children, including children with disabilities. Five of the draft program standards focus on children and their learning and development. The others focus on the elements needed to foster excellent programs—teaching staff; family and community partnerships; and leadership and administration.
- **Expanded Connection to Theory.** The *Theory Behind the Practice* boxes are a new feature that helps students understand how practice and theory are integrated.
- **New Reflection Questions.** Provocative reflection questions at the end of each chapter are designed to help students to self-reflect making it easier for them to use their own experience to understand children better.
- **Updated Scholarship.** Increased scholarship shows in the updated information on brain research, cognition, inclusion, and diversity and is reflected in the end notes, *For Further Reading* section, and the references.
- **Expanded Observation Resources.** Increased information on observation skills are reflected in two new sections in the early chapters and augmented throughout. In addition there is now an observation guide and activity book as supplements to help students become effective observers.

## FEATURES

- New **Part-Opening Introductions** provide readers with an overview of the chapters to follow and how each informs the larger message of the part.
- A **Chapter Outline** begins each chapter to lay out the key topics.
- The *In This Chapter You Will Discover* provides readers with a listing of what they should learn by reading the chapter.
- **Marginal links** key content to the **NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards**.
- *Focus on Diversity* boxes allow readers to understand differences in new ways.

- *Points of View* boxes provide two sides of an argument or idea.
- *The Theory Behind the Practice* presents expanded coverage of theory.
- *A Story to End With* concludes each chapter with a brief scenario related to the chapter's topics to show the reader the theory in action.
- A **Summary** provides a conclusion to each chapter.
- *Online Resources* remind the reader of the study materials available on the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e](http://www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e).
- *Reflection Questions* encourage students to consider and apply the chapter's topics.
- *Terms to Know* lists key terms discussed in the chapter.
- *For Further Reading* presents a listing of suggested related readings.

## SUPPLEMENTS

### For the Instructor

**Instructors' Resource CD-ROM.** The text is accompanied by an IRCD that includes the instructor's manual, test bank, and computerized test bank.

**Instructor's Online Learning Center.** Located at [www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e](http://www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e), the Instructor's area of the Online Learning Center includes the password-protected instructor's manual and other resources.

### For the Student

**Resources for Observation and Reflection.** Packaged for free with new copies of this text, *Resources for Observation and Reflection* includes an Observation Guide with guidelines and forms for observing children, Reflection Questions to accompany each chapter of the text, extensive listings of journal, books, video and Web resources, and the NAEYC Standards and Position Papers referenced in the text. If not purchasing a new copy of the text, students can purchase a copy of this guide by calling McGraw-Hill customer service at 1-800-338-3987.

**Online Learning Center.** Located at [www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e](http://www.mhhe.com/gonzalezfound3e), the Online Learning Center includes a student study guide with quizzes and Web links.

***Diversity in Early Care and Education Programs, 4e* by Janet Gonzalez-Mena.** This briefer text focuses on diversity in early care and education programs.

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