

Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education

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BUILDING A FOUNDATION



Sue Bredekamp

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Fourth Edition

Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education

Building a Foundation

Sue Bredekamp

*Early Childhood Education Specialist and
Independent Consultant*



 Pearson

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Dedication

To Joe Bredekamp, for a lifetime of love, friendship, wonderful memories, and tolerance of craziness.



About the Author

Dr. Sue Bredekamp is an Early Childhood Education Specialist from Washington, DC. She serves as a consultant on curriculum, pedagogy, developmentally appropriate practice, and professional development for organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Head Start, the Council for Professional Recognition, state departments of education, and universities. Her seminal work on NAEYC's best-selling publications on *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* has had a major impact on the education of young children and teacher preparation for more than 30 years. As NAEYC's Director of Accreditation and Professional Development, she developed and administered their national accreditation system for early childhood centers and schools, and wrote standards for curriculum and assessment, and teacher education.

Dr. Bredekamp is a frequent keynote speaker and author of numerous books and articles on professional practice. She has been a visiting lecturer at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia; Monash University in Melbourne; New Zealand Tertiary College; University of Alaska; and University of Hawaii. Dr. Bredekamp holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction and an M.A. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Maryland. In 2014, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University recognized Dr. Bredekamp with its Visionary Leadership Award.

Dr. Bredekamp serves as Chair-Emerita of the Board of HighScope Educational Research Foundation. She served on the National Research Council's (NRC) Committee on Early Childhood Mathematics which produced a landmark report, *Mathematics in Early Childhood: Paths toward Excellence and Equity*. She co-authored *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children* and was the content developer and on-air faculty for *HeadsUp! Reading*, a live satellite television course on early literacy disseminated to more than 10,000 early educators. For more than 45 years, Dr. Bredekamp has worked for and with young children toward the goal of improving the quality and effectiveness of early childhood education programs.

About the Contributors



Dr. Kathleen (Kate) Gallagher is the Director of Research and Evaluation at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. Dr. Gallagher is an educational psychologist and early childhood professional, with more than 30 years of experience teaching, home visiting, and leading early childhood programs, including early intervention and inclusive preschool programs. Her research, evaluation, and teaching focus on practices, programs, and policies that support the development and well-being of young children 0–8 years and their families, particularly in the contexts of poverty, disability, and cultural diversity. Her recent work is focused on how organizations can implement policies and practices to support the well-being of early childhood professionals. Kate holds a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a master's in education from Marquette University, and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and special education from Cardinal Stritch University. Kate has presented two TED talks on the transformative power of early childhood education, and has published extensively on children's early language and literacy, social-emotional development, and early intervention.

Dr. Gail Joseph is an associate professor of Educational Psychology and Early Childhood and Family Studies at the University of Washington. She teaches courses, advises students, provides service, and conducts research on early learning and equity, child care quality, teacher preparation, early childhood mental health, and school readiness. She is the Founding Executive Director of Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington and was the Director of the Head Start Center for Inclusion and Co-Director of the National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning funded by the Office of Head Start. At Cultivate Learning she oversees the quality ratings system for all licensed child care and pre-K programs in the state, and is the creator of numerous professional learning resources such as *Circle Time Magazine* and the *Meaningful Makeover* series. Additionally, she is the Founding Director of the EarlyEdU Alliance. The EarlyEdU Alliance is improving the quality of programs for more than 30,000 children nationwide by making relevant, affordable bachelor's degrees accessible to the early childhood workforce. Using the latest research on optimizing child outcomes and adult learning, the technology-powered pedagogy of EarlyEdU creates degrees that make a significant contribution to individuals and the field. To serve as an innovation lab, Dr. Joseph led the development of the University of Washington's first online B.A. completion degree in early childhood education which was just ranked #1 in the nation. Dr. Joseph is the 2018 recipient of the the David R. Thorud Leadership Award at the University of Washington.



Megan Schumaker-Murphy has worked in early childhood education for 15 years as a special education teacher, early interventionist, and teacher educator. At last count, Ms. Schumaker-Murphy worked directly with more than 300 families and more than 150 teachers and early interventionists serving more than 1,000 young children across those settings. She is a doctoral candidate and instructor at DePaul University in Chicago where she lives with her family and two adorably naughty cats.



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My motivations for writing the prior editions of this book were both personal and professional. I began my career in early childhood education more than 45 years ago as an unqualified child care teacher. During the intervening years, I've often wished that I had known even a fraction of what I know now about child development, and effective teaching and learning so I could have been a better teacher. I initially wrote this text to help ensure that new teachers get off to a better start than I did and that the children do, too.

My professional motivations emanate from the current explosion in research that should be informing our practice to a much greater extent than it is today. Neuroscience and research on child development, teaching, and curriculum provide considerable guidance about effective practices and what children truly need to be physically and mentally healthy and successful in school and life. In addition, I continue to feel the responsibility to clarify and explain what *developmentally appropriate practice* really means—that it is not ages and stages but rather a complex decision-making process on the part of teachers that is embedded in social and cultural contexts.

As I wrote this fourth edition, I reflected a great deal on my entire career. I had the privilege of spending time and videotaping at the Center for Young Children (CYC) at the University of Maryland, my alma mater. I'm proud of the fact that the CYC is NAEYC-accredited because I developed and directed the accreditation system. When I visit the program and many others like it in our country, I see what we early childhood professionals continue to envision for every child—a caring community of enthusiastic learners, effective teaching, engaging and challenging curriculum, and developmentally appropriate practice implemented as it is intended. My mentor, Dr. Carol Seefeldt was one of the visionaries whose work influenced the design and curriculum at the CYC. I feel her presence there and in my work every day.

Many parents, policy makers, economists, business leaders, and researchers now consider early education essential for long-term success in life. Our profession has a deep responsibility to meet these lofty expectations. But the power of early education depends on the quality of teacher-child interactions and the effectiveness of instructional practices. To achieve their potential, children need and deserve highly competent, well-educated, well-compensated teachers. But most of all, we have a responsibility to ensure that young children have safe, secure, and joyful childhoods. Only then can we fulfill the promise that lies within every child.



New to This Edition

- A new cross-cutting theme of the entire book is the importance of developing children’s executive function, self-regulation, and positive approaches to learning. Every chapter and many established features, such as *Becoming an Intentional Teacher and Promoting Play*, present examples of effective curriculum and teaching to promote these goals for children.
- New *What Works* features in 10 chapters discuss executive function, self-regulation, approaches to learning, or brain development.
- The revised Chapter 13 is a STEM chapter with discussion and examples of engineering and increased emphasis on science standards and teaching practices in addition to mathematics and technology.
- Chapter 1 is updated with discussion of new policies, changing demographics, and new research on child development and effective early education. The chapter addresses both trends in the field and challenging issues such as adverse childhood experiences, stress in children’s and families’ lives, the opioid crisis, threats to children’s play, bullying, and social media.
- Chapter 3 is updated with a discussion of new research and ongoing issues such as the importance of situating decisions in cultural context, scripted curriculum, and academic rigor and developmentally appropriate practice. The reorganized chapter includes learning materials with environments.
- Updated research and new strategies for dealing with toxic stress and challenging behavior appear in Chapter 8 and Chapter 14.
- The updated Chapter 2 includes the history of Reggio Emilia and discusses Loris Malaguzzi as a major historical figure.
- New *Promoting Play* features in six chapters emphasize protecting children’s right to play, especially in kindergarten.
- Chapter 1 and Chapter 16 provide a discussion of NAEYC’s *Power to the Profession*.
- Updated culture and language lenses are provided on culturally responsive curriculum, teaching, and learning, as well as discussions on professional ethics in challenging times.
- New examples of developmentally appropriate digital media for children, teachers, and families appear throughout the text.
- New artifacts of children’s work appear throughout.

Book Organization Continues to Reflect *Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice*

This book is designed to teach the concept of *developmentally appropriate practice* for students, because an understanding of its principles is the foundation on which to build early childhood programs and schools for children from birth through age 8. Chapters are organized according to NAEYC’s guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, which I have coauthored for more than 30 years.

Part 1, “Foundations of Early Childhood Education,” describes the current profession and the issues and trends affecting it today (Chapter 1), the rich history from which developmentally appropriate practices evolved (Chapter 2), and an overview of its principles and guidelines, which are described in depth in later chapters (Chapter 3).

Part 2, “Dimensions of Developmentally Appropriate Practice,” includes chapters describing the key factors teachers must consider as they make professional decisions. Chapter 4 presents an overview of current knowledge about how all children develop and learn. Chapter 5 addresses the unique, individual differences among children, including children with diverse abilities. Chapter 6 discusses the critical role of social, cultural, and linguistic contexts on all children’s development and learning and how teachers must embrace a diverse society to help every child succeed in school and life. Though addressed in different chapters, these three dimensions are integrally connected.

Part 3, “Intentional Teaching: How to Teach,” describes the role of the teacher in implementing developmentally appropriate practices. Each of the interconnected aspects of the teacher’s role is addressed in separate chapters: building effective partnerships with families (Chapter 7), creating a caring community of learners and guiding young children (Chapter 8); teaching to enhance learning and development (Chapter 9); planning effective curriculum (Chapter 10); and assessing children’s learning and development (Chapter 11).

Part 4, “Implementing an Effective Curriculum: What to Teach,” describes both *how* and *what to teach* children from birth through age 8 in language, literacy, the arts, STEM, social-emotional development, social studies, physical development, and health. Each chapter demonstrates how the continuum of children’s development influences decisions about curriculum content and intentional, effective teaching strategies for children of different ages.

Early childhood educators join this profession and stay in it because they believe their work can make a difference in the lives of children and their families. But to make a lasting difference, our practices must be effective—they must contribute to children’s learning and development. This book reflects this core goal by building on the basic framework of developmentally appropriate practice while going beyond to emphasize intentional teaching, challenging and interesting curriculum, and evidence-based, effective practices for a new generation of early childhood educators. Each of these key themes is discussed on the following pages.

Intentional Teaching of Young Children

This text builds on the framework of developmentally appropriate practice emphasizing that effective teachers are intentional, thoughtful, and purposeful in everything they do.

Intentional teachers know not only what to do with children but also why they are doing it and can explain the rationale for the decisions they make to other teachers, administrators, and families. To help students understand this concept, **Becoming an Intentional Teacher** features reveal what teachers are thinking in classroom situations, *how* and *why* they select the strategies they do, and challenge students to reflect further on these scenarios.

Becoming an Intentional Teacher

Expanding Children's Experience

Here's What Happened The preschool I work in is located in a rural community. Our curriculum is based on the Bank Street approach. At the beginning of the year, the children were very excited about riding the bus to school for the first time. They had so many questions that I decided we should pursue the topic. The children interviewed the bus driver, who is one of the children's mother. They drew pictures of the bus, sang "Wheels on the Bus," and played school bus. Based on the children's keen interest, I decided to introduce the idea of drawing maps of their bus routes. Some children have lengthy rides from the country while others live closer by.

Here's What I Was Thinking The basic premise of the Bank Street approach is to begin the curriculum study in the "here and now" and expand children's experiences and learning from there. The school bus study began

easily enough with the initial enthusiasm of riding to school. But I anticipated that these rides would soon become boring. Distracted preschoolers might create unsafe conditions on the bus. I decided to enhance the learning experience with the challenge of mapping their routes. This required keen observation and focused attention on the children's part. It also introduced them to geography and mapping skills.

Reflection Many schools today are given a curriculum that prescribes certain topics of study such as seasons or animals that may not reflect the lives and experiences of the children. If you were a teacher in such a situation, how could you apply the principles of the Bank Street approach to make the experiences more meaningful?



Current Research on Effective Practices

In an era of expanding research on child development and learning, Common Core State Standards, Early Learning standards, accountability, and rapid change in the field, the text makes research understandable and meaningful for students and illustrates the connections between child development, curriculum content, assessment, and intentional teaching.

What Works features present research-based practices in action, including descriptions of demonstrated effective practices such as strategies to develop executive function and using relaxation techniques to prevent challenging behaviors.

What Works

High Quality Programs Promote Executive Function

The most frequently used observational measure of preschool quality is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). This tool assesses three aspects of program quality: the emotional climate, classroom organization, and instructional climate. Research shows that children in classrooms with higher scores on each dimension have positive outcomes in academic subjects such as literacy and mathematics, but notably in executive function, which facilitates learning across all areas. Teachers' positive, responsive relationships with children predict working memory, impulse control, and mental flexibility—that is, their executive functioning. The more emotional support teachers provide children, the better they are able to focus their attention, control their behavior, and engage in learning.

In addition, well-organized classroom routines promote executive functioning and positive approaches to learning. In such classrooms, children are more eager to learn, behave appropriately, pay attention, and persist at tasks. CLASS scores on instructional climate measure how well teachers support children's higher-order

thinking, problem-solving, and language development. These teaching strategies have been found to help children behave more positively because they control negative impulses and use language and reasoning to solve problems rather than quarreling or fighting. Research in early elementary classrooms has similar results. For example, scores on classroom organization in kindergarten positively affect children's self-control, work habits, and engagement in learning.

Most standards for both program quality and child outcomes—NAEYC, Head Start, and state early learning guidelines—address these key elements of quality for a reason. They work in children's best interests.

Source: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017. Executive function and self-regulation. Retrieved November 5, 2017, from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu>.
Teachstone, 2017. Effective teacher-child interactions and child outcomes: A summary of research on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pre-K-3rd Grade. Charlottesville, VA.



Language Lens

Preparing to Teach Dual Language Learners

Eight different languages are spoken among the children in Natalia's kindergarten class. Natalia and two of the children are the only ones whose first language is English. Natalia works hard to create a caring community where all the children comfortably experiment with learning English while also developing their home languages. She strives to communicate with the parents by using translators. Last year, Natalia's class also included eight languages—but some of them were different from those spoken this year.

The number of languages represented in Natalia's classroom may seem extreme, but linguistic and cultural diversity is now the norm in our nation's schools. In the next 20 years, the biggest single child-related demographic change is predicted to be an increase in dual language learners. Most of these children speak Spanish as a home language, but many others speak Asian, Middle Eastern, and African languages. California, Florida, and Texas continue to have the largest percentages of Spanish-speaking families, but the Hispanic population grew in many regions of the country. In fact, Georgia's Hispanic population more than doubled in two decades.

In the past, most teachers could safely assume that they would never encounter a language other than English in their entire careers. Today, Natalia's experience, or something like it, is not so very rare. New teachers may find it beneficial to learn another language themselves, but learning eight languages is not a reasonable expectation. What can new and experienced teachers such as Natalia do? They can start by remembering some important principles about dual language learners:

- People who speak the same language, whether Spanish or another language, are not all alike—they come from a variety of countries and cultures.
- Learning two or more languages does not confuse children as some people think, but rather enhances brain development.
- Dual language learners can better focus attention because alternating languages requires intense concentration.
- Supporting home language development is essential because children can learn many skills in their home language and apply those skills as they learn English.
- Teachers need to intentionally teach English vocabulary and provide lots of opportunities for children to play together and practice their developing language skills.
- Communicating with families is essential regardless of the effort required.

The children of today must be prepared to function as citizens of a global society. Speaking two or more languages is an important skill for the 21st century. When children enter early childhood programs speaking a language other than English, the foundation is already there on which to build.

Sources: Flores, 2017. *How the U.S. Hispanic population is changing*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017. *Promoting the educational success of children and youth learning English*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Bratslavsky & Werber, 2016. *The systematic effects of bilingualism on children's development*. *Developmental Science*, 20(1).

Lens features present insights on culture, language, and including all children. These features discuss practice through diverse *lenses*, expanding the sources of information teachers use to make decisions and helping them look at questions or problems from broader perspectives. Widening the lens with which teachers view their practice is a strategy to move beyond the persistent educational tendency to dichotomize difficult or controversial issues into "either/or" choices, and move toward "both/and" thinking.

Connections between Curriculum and Child Development

Unlike many early childhood texts that focus on child development only, this text shows how child development and curriculum content knowledge are connected.

In the **Developmental Continuum** feature, the text provides an overview of the continuum of learning in the areas of language, literacy, mathematics, and cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and describes how child development is linked to curriculum planning for children from birth through age 8.

Developmental Continuum Literacy in Kindergarten and Primary Grades

Age/Grade Level	Widely Held Expectations
Most kindergartners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoy being read to, retell stories and what they've learned from information books Experiment with and use early literacy skills Respond to open-ended questions that require inferences about a story and connections to events beyond the story Begin to think aloud when listening to books Use language to describe and explain what is read Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters automatically and make most letter-sound matches Demonstrate phonemic awareness, blend and segment syllables in words, and blend and segment onsets and rimes Write letters and high-frequency words Recognize some words by sight, including common ones (a, the, me, you, it) Use phonemic awareness and letter knowledge to write with invented spelling May read emergent literacy texts conventionally by the end of kindergarten
Most first graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the transition from experiential to "real" or conventional reading Read about accurately and with reasonable fluency texts appropriate for beginning grade 1 Use letter-sound associations, word parts, and context to decode and identify new words Use strategies when comprehension breaks down (reread, reread, reread, questioning, questioning) Use reading and writing for various purposes on their own initiative ("I want to write a Valentine for my mom.") Sound out and represent all substantial sounds when spelling a word Identify an increasing number of words by sight, including common irregularly spelled words such as said, where, and two Write various kinds of texts about meaningful topics (journals, stories) Use some punctuation and capitalization correctly
Most second graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read more fluently and write various text forms using simple and more complex sentences Use word identification strategies to figure out unknown words Use strategies to aid comprehension more efficiently, such as rereading, questioning, and using context Read with greater fluency Identify an increasing number of words by sight Write about a range of topics for different audiences Use common letter patterns to spell words Punctuate basic sentences correctly and proofread their writing Read daily and use reading to get information on topics of study
Most third graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read fluently and enjoy reading Extend and refine their reading and writing for various purposes and audiences Use a range of strategies to make meaning from unfamiliar text Use word identification strategies appropriately and automatically when encountering unknown words Recognize and discuss elements of different text structures Write expressively in various forms such as stories, reports, and letters Use a rich vocabulary and complex sentence structure Revise and edit their writing during and after composing Spell words correctly in final drafts

Source: Based on G. Marilla, C. Loring, & E. Boshuiz, 2016. *Assessing and guiding young children's development and learning with 4K*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson and C. Snow, M. S. Tabors, & S. Griffin (Eds.), 1998. *Emerging literacy difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

- Chapters 12 to 15 help early childhood teachers understand right from the start that there is content in the curriculum for young children. They describe the goals for young children's learning and development that predict success in school and life. Each of these chapters includes examples of effective strategies such as teaching children of diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms or ways to promote dual language learning.

The **Promoting Play** feature presents current research on the important role of play in development and effective strategies to help children learn through play or protect their right to play. These features address play across the full age range, from birth through age 8. Discussions of play are also integrated in each chapter throughout this book as an effective means to support all domains of development and promote learning in all curriculum areas. Today, many people are concerned about how the standards movement is negatively impacting play. We often hear statements such as "We can't let children play because we have to teach literacy," or "We don't have time for outdoor play in primary grades because we have to get children ready for standardized tests." Play should not be treated as a separate part of an early childhood program or day that can be cut if someone deems it unimportant. Therefore, you will find a discussion of play in every chapter of this book.

- The emphasis on effective curriculum reflects current trends such as the goal of aligning prekindergarten and primary education, NAEYC accreditation and CAPE professional preparation standards, and enhanced expectations for teacher qualifications as described in the 2015 report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 9: A Unifying Foundation* by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, the 2018 report of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), *Transforming the financing of early care and education*, and NAEYC's Power to the Profession initiative.



Promoting Play
Protecting Play in Kindergarten

Early educators often say, "Play is a child's work." But play and work are really two different things, as most kindergartners will tell you. With increased emphasis on academic standards and testing, play has disappeared from kindergarten, which has become much more like first grade. Kindergartners are often in for a shock. Rather than having child-choice or center time, they are expected to pay attention during long periods of whole group literacy and math instruction, then sit at desks doing worksheets. One mother reported that her son did 70 worksheets during the first 15 days of school. Little time is devoted to the arts that children love. Even in full-day programs, there is less physical activity or outdoor play. After school, play is also threatened because 5- and 6-year-olds now have homework.

Teachers feel pressured to teach formal reading and prepare children for standardized tests. Parents lament that their 5-year-olds who loved preschool have tummy aches or are reluctant to go school. Many hold their children back a year so they will be older and better able to handle the demands.

So what's to be done? Resist the debate about play vs. academics. It is not an either/or choice. There is abundant research about developmentally appropriate, meaningful ways to promote literacy, language, and mathematics learning without lengthy didactic instruction or worksheets. At the same time, play opportunities in kindergarten should not be a free-for-all. Playful social interaction is necessary for language and social-emotional development. Neuroscience demonstrates the importance of self-regulation and executive function. These capacities are developed during teacher-supported play and may be impaired in stressful kindergartens. Children's approaches to learning—their enthusiasm, motivation, engagement, curiosity, and creativity—are strengthened when various kinds of learning-full play are both protected and provided.

Sources: Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016. Is kindergarten the new first grade? *AERA Open*, 1(4), 1-31; Abbott, 2017. Keeping the "kindergarten" in kindergarten: Developmentally appropriate practice in New York. *Preschool Matters Today*. Retrieved from NIEER.org; Brown, 2017. All work and no play needs to change for kindergartners. Here's why. World Economic Forum blog.

Revel™

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- Provide an all-in-one solution
 - Fully digital and highly engaging, Revel gives students everything they need for the course—all in one continuous, integrated learning experience. Highlighting, note taking, and a glossary let students read and study however they like. Educators can add notes for students, too, including reminders or study tips.
- Engage students as they read
 - Revel was designed to help every student come to class ready to learn. To keep students engaged as they read through each chapter, Revel integrates videos, interactives, and assessments directly into the author-created narrative. Thanks to this media-rich presentation of content, students are more likely to complete their assigned reading and retain what they've read. So they'll show up to class better prepared to participate and learn.
- Encourage practice and review
 - Embedded *Check Your Understanding* concept checks afford students opportunities to check their understanding at regular intervals before moving on. Assessments in Revel let instructors gauge student comprehension frequently, provide timely feedback, and address learning gaps along the way.
- Foster critical thinking through writing
 - The writing functionality in Revel enables educators to integrate writing—among the best ways to foster and assess critical thinking—into the course without significantly impacting their grading burden. Assignable *Shared Writing* activities direct students to share written responses with classmates, fostering peer discussion.

Over more than four decades in early childhood education, I have had the privilege of working with and learning from countless friends, colleagues, teachers, and children. This book would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of the following people:

Deep appreciation goes to my three contributors without whom I would not have been able to complete this text. Dr. Kathleen Cranley Gallagher revised Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 7. Kate's expertise on early intervention, social-emotional development, and mental health greatly inform this edition.

I am thrilled that Dr. Gail E. Joseph was able to revise Chapter 8 and 14. Gail wrote several chapters and the Including All Children features for the first edition. Her innovative work on early intervention, improving Head Start and child care, and cutting-edge professional development of teachers has made a significant contribution to the field and been a personal inspiration to me.

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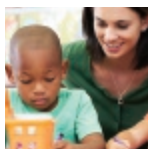
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Continuity and Change in Early Childhood Education

Learning Outcomes

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1.1** Describe early childhood education.
- 1.2** Explain the reasons for becoming an early childhood educator.
- 1.3** Explain high-quality early childhood education and how it is measured.
- 1.4** Report research about the positive effects of early childhood education.
- 1.5** Analyze the current trends and issues affecting children, families, and teachers.

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Related NAEYC Professional Preparation Standard

The NAEYC Professional Preparation Standard that applies to this chapter:

Standard 6: Becoming a Professional (NAEYC, 2011)

Key elements:

6a: Identifying and involving oneself with the early childhood field

6e: Engaging in informed advocacy for young children and the early childhood profession

Case Study

At Cresthaven Primary School, teachers, children, and family members of all generations are viewing children’s work and sharing memories during the year-end celebration. Cresthaven is located in a community that has adopted a birth-to-age 8 approach to education and child development. The public school serves children from pre-kindergarten to grade 3, and works in partnership with the local Head Start and Early Head Start programs. A nearby child-care program, the Reed Center, serves infants to 5-year-olds and provides before- and after-school care. The school principal, program directors, and teachers are committed to ensuring seamless transitions and aligned learning experiences for children. All are invited to the celebration.

Children who will attend Cresthaven next year get to see the building and meet teachers. The preschoolers are in awe of the “big school.” Parents see children’s work displayed in the hallway. “Look, Mommy! Here’s my painting of the yellow fish,” cries 4-year-old Amber as she tugs on her mother’s hand. “See where I wrote my name. And here’s Brenda’s picture. She’s my new best friend.” Amber’s mother smiles and tries to read what her daughter wrote: “I lk fsh.” The teacher, Ms. Engels, comes up and says, “Amber knows a lot about writing and letters. She can write her name, and she is starting to write the consonants she hears in words.” Mario, who attends Head Start, reminds his mother that he can write too.

For several years, Cresthaven School has been involved with its neighbors and the other early childhood education programs in a community garden project. In each class, the teachers connect the larger curriculum—especially science and social studies goals—to aspects of the garden project. Six-year-old Sergio and his grandmother walk down the hall to find the list of all the meals the kindergartners prepared with the vegetables they harvested. A Spanish-speaking teacher, Mrs. Zapeda, greets Sergio’s grandmother and makes her welcome. Sergio explains, “And tonight, we get to eat strawberries!” Meanwhile, first-grader Mathias quietly explains to some parents, “Me and my friends made this graph. It shows the vegetables the kids liked most.” Third-grader Carola describes her class project to her father. “You’ll like this, Dad. For social studies, we’re figuring out where food comes from and why it costs so much.”

The second-grade teacher, Ms. George, gets everyone’s attention. “Our class is going to present their video of the garden project in 15 minutes.” Seven-year-old Kelsey takes 75-year-old Mrs. Carrero by the hand and invites her to see the show. The children share most of the food raised in the garden with elderly neighbors such as Mrs. Carrero. “I’ll read you the story I wrote about the garden too,” says Kelsey.





Four-year-old Cooper, who has autism, has been in Ms. Watson’s Head Start class for two years. His mother comes up and quietly whispers to Ms. Watson, “I wanted you to know that Cooper got invited to Martie’s birthday party. I never thought that would happen, but he’s made more progress than I ever imagined.”

As she’s leaving, Nicky’s mom stops to thank Isela and Evan, who are finishing their first year of teaching 2-year-olds at Reed Center. They remember their struggles with Nicky’s tantrums as he hugs his mom’s leg and playfully peeks around at Evan. She says, “I know he is growing up and has to move to preschool, but we are really going to miss you two.” ■

Listening to these children, parents, and teachers, some new to the field and others with many years of experience, reveals the most exciting—as well as challenging—dimensions of early childhood education. Teaching young children is hard work. It takes energy, physical stamina, patience, a sense of humor, and a wide range of knowledge and skill. But early childhood professionals soon discover the rewards of their efforts. Nothing is quite as exciting as making a baby smile and giggle, seeing a toddler’s grin as he climbs the stairs on his own, or observing a preschooler’s serious look as she comes to the rescue as a pretend firefighter. And what can compete with a first grader’s feeling of utter accomplishment that accompanies learning to read?

Early childhood education is a rewarding profession for many reasons. We describe the diverse field of early childhood education and discuss its rewards in this chapter. We also discuss why high-quality early education is now widely recognized as critically important for our country. We examine current trends and issues in the field and larger society that present both opportunities and challenges. We also describe how, in a period of rapid change, the early childhood profession continues to be shaped by its enduring values. Above all, early childhood educators enter and stay in the field primarily for one reason—they know that their work makes a difference in the lives of children and families. ■



What Is Early Childhood Education?

early childhood education

Education and child care services provided for children from birth through age 8.

professionals Members of an occupational group that make decisions based on a specialized body of knowledge, continue to learn throughout their careers, and are committed to meeting the needs of others.

Early childhood education is a highly diverse field that serves children from birth through age 8. During these years, children participate in many different kinds of care and education settings. Regardless of where they work or what their specific job titles are, however, early childhood teachers are **professionals**. This means that they make decisions based on a specialized body of knowledge, continue to learn throughout their careers, and are committed to providing the best care and education possible for every child. The opportunity to make a difference in this exciting field has never been greater.

How Early Childhood Education Is Valued

In recent years, early childhood education has achieved increasing public recognition, respect, and funding. In a time of political polarization, a national bipartisan poll found that 79% of voters—equal proportions of Republicans and Democrats—believe that the federal government should improve the quality of child care and preschool, and make it more affordable for parents (First Five Years Fund, 2017). The same poll found that 85% of voters oppose cutting funding to programs, 74% believe that early education prepares children for school, and 69% agree that it leads to a more skilled workforce. Regardless of party affiliation, voters agree that the federal government should provide funds to states to improve access to high-quality programs for both low- and middle-income families, increase tax credits to help all families pay for child care, and increase Head Start funding.

Forty-three states—as diverse as Oklahoma, Georgia, New Mexico, New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Florida—provide funding for prekindergarten programs (Barnett et al., 2017). Continued funding even in challenging economic times reflects growing public recognition of the benefits of early education, especially for children at



risk of later school failure, but also for middle-class children. A great many policymakers, parents, and researchers now consider early childhood programs essential for fostering school readiness and long-term success in life (Garcia, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2016; Pre-kindergarten Task Force, 2017).

A national, bipartisan nonprofit organization, Council for a Strong America, is a coalition that includes law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, coaches, and athletes who strongly support the value of high-quality early education, especially for children from low-income families. They believe it prevents crime, builds stronger families, and is necessary to prepare a qualified workforce for the military and economic prosperity (Council for a Strong America, 2017). A prestigious group of America's police officers and prosecutors call themselves "the guy you pay later" because America's failure to pay for quality services for children increases the costs of the criminal justice system (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2017).

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman is a powerful advocate for early education. His research demonstrates that investing in early education is a cost-effective strategy that will improve education and health outcomes, strengthen the economy, help solve America's social problems, and produce a more capable, productive workforce (Garcia et al., 2016).

Several factors have contributed to the rise in status of early childhood education. These include an impressive body of research on the positive effects of early childhood programs and concerns about the persistent achievement gap in our schools. Next, we examine the overall landscape of the field, including the types of settings where children are served.

The Landscape of Early Childhood Education

Although early childhood terminology is not uniform across diverse settings, throughout this text we will use vocabulary that is consistent with that used by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** and that we believe best represents the present and future of the field. NAEYC, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is the world's largest professional organization of early childhood educators. Founded in 1926, NAEYC's mission is to promote high-quality early learning for children birth through age 8 by connecting practice, policy, and research; to advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession; and to support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

One way the association achieves its mission is by establishing standards for teacher preparation at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate-degree levels (NAEYC, 2011). NAEYC's standards have considerable influence in the field; it is likely that the course you are now taking is designed to meet the association's professional preparation standards. NAEYC (2017) also administers an accreditation system for high-quality early learning programs for children and provides resources such as publications and conferences to support teachers' continuing professional development.

Given NAEYC's definition of the field—birth through age 8—early childhood teachers work with various groups:

1. *Infants and toddlers*: birth to 36 months
2. *Preschoolers*: 3- and 4-year-olds
3. *Kindergartners*: 5- and 6-year-olds
4. *Primary grades 1, 2, and 3*: 6-, 7-, and 8-year-olds.

Because early childhood is defined so broadly, the field encompasses child-care centers and homes, preschools, kindergartens, and primary grade schools. Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of the various settings where young children are educated and receive care. Young children are always learning, and they always need loving care. Therefore, it is important *not* to distinguish child care from early education, but rather to ensure that all children have access to programs that are both caring and educational, regardless of the length of day or who provides the service.

Child Care The term *child care* typically refers to care and education provided for young children during the hours that their parents are employed. To accommodate work schedules, child care is usually available for extended hours, such as from 7:00 a.m. to

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) The world's largest organization of early childhood educators whose mission is to promote high-quality early learning for children ages birth through 8 by connecting practice, policy, and research; to advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession; and to support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

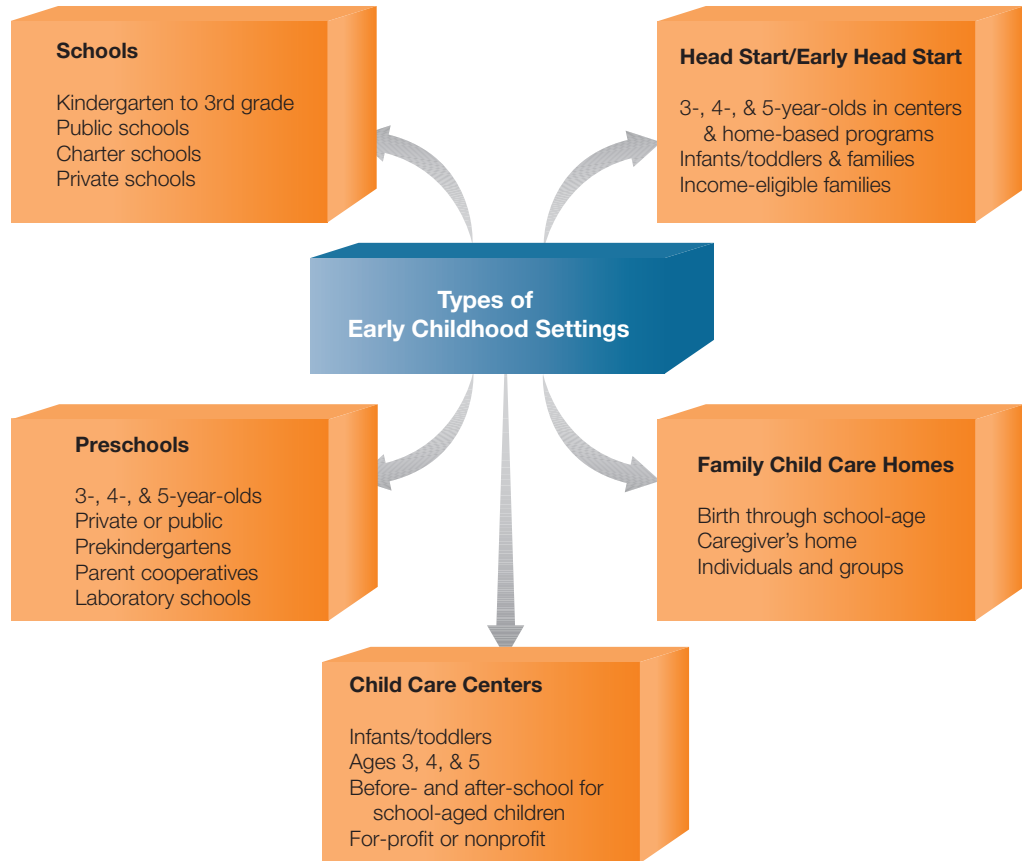


FIGURE 1.1 Types of Early Childhood Settings Early childhood education is a diverse field because young children's care and education occurs in a variety of settings, as depicted here.

Child care center Group program that provides care and education for young children during the hours that their parents are employed.

family child care home Child care in which caregivers provide care in their own homes for a small group of children, often multi-age groups.

preschool Educational programs serving 3- and 4-year-olds delivered under various sponsorships.

parent cooperative Preschool program owned, operated, and partially staffed by parents.

laboratory school School operated by colleges and universities that usually serves children of students and faculty and also acts as a model of excellent education for student teachers.

6:00 p.m. In some settings, such as hospital-affiliated child care centers, care is offered for longer hours to accommodate evening, weekend, or even night-shift employment.

Child care is typically provided in two types of group programs: **child care centers** and **family child care homes**. In either setting, children's care may be privately funded by parent tuition or publicly subsidized for low-income families. Child care centers usually enroll children from infancy through preschool-age children, and many also offer before- and after-school care for primary grade children. In family child care homes, caregivers provide care in their own homes for a small group of children, often of varying ages. Family child care is the setting of choice for many parents of infants and toddlers because of its home-like atmosphere.

Preschool As their name implies, **preschool** programs serve 3- and 4-year-olds prior to their entrance into kindergarten. As of 2016, 42% of 3-year-olds and 70% of 4-year-olds attended preschool (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, & Nores, 2016). These programs may be operated by community organizations or by churches, temples, or other faith-based organizations and also by **parent cooperatives**, which are run and partially staffed by groups of parents. Preschools often operate half-day, although extended hours—the school day—are becoming more common. Some colleges and universities operate **laboratory schools**, which usually serve children of students and faculty and also act as models for student teachers.

Preschools are called by various names, including *nursery schools* and *prekindergartens*. To further complicate matters, child-care centers are also called preschools. Preschool programs are both privately and publicly funded. Those that are funded by parent tuition primarily serve middle- or upper-income families. Two particular types of preschools are designed primarily for children from low-income families: public prekindergarten and Head Start.



Public Prekindergarten The term **prekindergarten (pre-K)** usually refers to pre-schools that are funded by state and local departments of education. Public prekindergarten is in the news media regularly and is the fastest-growing sector of the field, with enrollment increasing enormously in recent years. In 1980, 96,000 preschoolers were served in public elementary schools; in 2017, enrollment had increased to 1.5 million children across 43 states (Barnett et al., 2017).

The primary purpose of prekindergarten is to improve **school readiness**; that is, to prepare children for kindergarten. Although some state officials narrowly define readiness as literacy and math skills, the early childhood profession uses a broad definition of school readiness that describes the whole child (Head Start, 2017):

- Approaches to learning
- Social and emotional development
- Language and literacy
- Cognition, including mathematics and scientific reasoning
- Physical development and health

This multi-faceted definition of readiness was first promulgated by the National Education Goals Panel (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995). At that time, approaches to learning was a loosely defined construct. However, current research demonstrates that *how* children learn, their **approaches to learning**—enthusiasm, interest, motivation, curiosity, initiative, and engagement—affect all other areas and strongly predict their success in school and later life.

The majority of public prekindergarten programs are designed for children from low-income families or those who are considered at risk for school failure due to conditions such as low levels of maternal education or speaking a language other than English in the home. However, a growing number of people are calling for funding of **universal voluntary prekindergarten**, the goal of which is to make these programs available to families of all income levels that choose to use them. Publicly funded prekindergarten has contributed to the field's growth; today, the number of 4-year-olds in state prekindergarten programs exceeds the number enrolled in Head Start (Barnett et al., 2017).

Head Start **Head Start** is a federally funded, national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children ages 3, 4, and 5.



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prekindergarten (pre-K)

Educational program serving 3- and 4-year-olds, usually in public schools.

school readiness Children's competencies related to success in kindergarten, including physical development, health, and well-being; social-emotional development and learning; cognitive development and general knowledge such as mathematics and science; positive approaches to learning such as curiosity and motivation; and language development and early literacy skills.

approaches to learning

Behaviors or typical patterns that children use in learning situations that include both how they feel about learning—their level of enthusiasm, interest, and motivation—and how they engage with learning—their curiosity, initiative, and creativity.

universal voluntary prekindergarten

Publicly funded preschool, usually for 4-year-olds but sometimes 3-year-olds; available to any family that chooses to use it.

Head Start Federally funded national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children ages 3, 4, and 5 through providing educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to the nation's poorest children and families.

Early childhood education includes child care centers, preschools, prekindergartens, family child care homes, and schools. But every high-quality program provides both loving care and education for young children and support for their families.



Early Head Start Federally funded program serving low-income pregnant mothers, infants, and toddlers that promotes healthy family functioning.

early childhood special education Services for children with disabilities or special needs who meet eligibility guidelines that are determined on a state-by-state basis according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal law governing provision of services for children with disabilities and special needs.

early intervention Services for infants and toddlers who are at risk of developmental delay and their families.

inclusion Participation and services for children with disabilities and special needs in programs and settings where their typically developing peers are served.

kindergarten Typically considered the first year of formal schooling; serves 5- and 6-year-olds.

primary grades First, second, and third grade; sometimes includes kindergarten.

Head Start provides educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to the nation's poorest children and to families whose incomes fall below the official poverty level (Head Start, 2017). Head Start's goal is to improve school readiness by supporting all areas of children's development and learning needed for later success. In addition to these comprehensive services, parent involvement is a special focus of the program. Parents volunteer in the classroom and serve in governance roles with the goal of empowering families to move out of poverty. In fact, 23% of Head Start staff members are parents of current or former Head Start children (Head Start, 2017). Children with disabilities make up about 12% of Head Start's enrollment (Head Start, 2017).

Head Start programs are quite diverse. Most Head Start children are served in classroom-based preschool programs, although in rural or remote areas, a home-based option is available. One of the smallest serves 30 children on the Havasupai reservation in the Grand Canyon, accessible only by helicopter or donkey, while the largest programs serve over 22,000 children in 400 centers across Los Angeles (Head Start, 2008).

The families represent all the racial and cultural groups in the United States (Head Start, 2017). About 44% of the children are White, 37% are Latino, and 29% are African American. A sizable number of families—10%—report that their children are biracial or multiracial. In addition, the program has a special focus on serving American Indians, Alaska Natives, and migrant and seasonal workers. About 30% of the children speak a language other than English at home. Of these, 85% speak Spanish, but 140 other languages are spoken.

In response to brain research and concerns that age 4 or even age 3 is too late for services to be effective, the government launched **Early Head Start** in 1995. Early Head Start serves low-income pregnant mothers, infants, and toddlers, and promotes healthy family functioning in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (Head Start, 2017). Research on Early Head Start (Vogel, Yange, Moiduddun, Kisker, & Carlson, 2010) demonstrates that it achieves its promise of lasting positive effects on children and families.

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education **Early childhood special education** serves children with disabilities or special needs who meet eligibility guidelines that are determined on a state-by-state basis, according to the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. In addition to serving children with identified disabilities, some states provide **early intervention** services for infants and toddlers who are at risk of developmental delay and their families.

Federal legislation enacted during the past three decades has fundamentally changed the way early childhood services are organized and delivered to children with disabilities and special needs (Division for Early Childhood & NAEYC, 2009). These children, including children who are at risk for disabilities or who exhibit challenging behaviors, are far more likely to participate in a typical early childhood program than in the past. This trend, called **inclusion**, is defined and described in the feature *Including All Children: What Does Inclusion Mean?*

Kindergarten and Primary Grades Most 5- through 8-year-old children attend public schools, although many attend secular or faith-based private schools funded by parent tuition. Typically considered the first year of formal schooling, **kindergarten** has traditionally been designed for 5-year-olds. States establish varying dates for the legal entrance age to kindergarten, but 44 states require that children who are entering kindergarten must have their fifth birthday before the end of September or earlier (Workman, 2014). This means that today's kindergartens enroll many 6-year-olds. By contrast, in 1975, only nine states required that children be age 5 by September (Colasanti, 2007)

First, second, and third grades are the **primary grade** years of school (6 through 8 years of age). These grades are especially important because



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Video Example 1.1:

Inclusion

All early childhood educators are likely to work with children with disabilities at some point in their careers. This inevitability broadens what teachers need to know right from the start. In this video, consider these questions: how does inclusion require that early childhood teachers collaborate with special educators? What are the benefits of inclusion for all children?



Including All Children

What Does Inclusion Mean?

Mark and Monique Berger operate a family child care program in their home. Their state permits group homes such as theirs to serve up to 12 children. The licensing agent informs them that they are required by law to serve children with disabilities and special needs. One mother, whose son Barry has cerebral palsy, has inquired about enrolling him in the Bergers' program. Mark wants to be sure that they abide by the law, but Monique is a little unsure about what it means to include a child with a disability in her child care home.

Although full inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs has been the law of the land for many years, Mark and Monique are not alone in being unsure about what it means. To guide them and other professionals like them, the DEC & NAEYC (2009) jointly developed a statement defining early childhood inclusion:

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.

The statement describes the key features of high-quality inclusive programs, which are (1) access, (2) participation, and (3) supports.

A defining feature of high-quality early childhood inclusion is *access*, which means providing children with a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, and environments. In inclusive settings, adults also promote belonging, *participation*, and engagement of children with disabilities and their typically developing peers in a variety of intentional or purposeful ways.

Finally, an infrastructure of inclusion *supports* must be in place to ensure a foundation for the efforts of individuals and organizations that provide inclusive services to children and families. For example, Mark and Monique will need access to ongoing professional development and support to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to effectively meet Barry's needs and contribute to his development. In addition, specialized services and therapies for Barry will need to be coordinated and integrated with the other activities they offer the children.

Source: Division for Early Childhood and National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009 *Early childhood inclusion: A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*. Retrieved November 4, 2017, from www.dec-sped.org/position-statements

during these grades, children are expected to acquire the fundamental abilities of reading and mathematics, along with the foundations of other academic disciplines including social studies, science, the creative arts, technology, and physical education. In first to third grade, children are learning to read; after that, they are expected to read to learn (Hernandez, (2011)). Therefore, if a good foundation is not laid during the primary years, children are likely to struggle in later years.

Forty states and the District of Columbia permit funding of public **charter schools**. Charter schools are independently operated, publicly-funded schools that have greater flexibility than regular schools in meeting regulations and achieving goals, but they must also meet accountability standards. They are operated under a contract with the state or district. In school districts in which charter schools are an option, parents have a choice of where to send their children. However, competition for spaces often means that families do not have meaningful choice. More than 3 million children attend charter schools, and the percentage is increasing (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2017).

charter schools Independently operated, publicly funded schools that have greater flexibility than regular schools in meeting regulations and achieving goals.

How Early Childhood Education Is Expanding

Participation in early childhood programs has increased steadily for many decades as more children participate in group programs at younger ages. In 1965, only 60% of 5-year-olds