

## Vignette: Émile

*It is the mid-1700s. A young lad, assumed to be Émile from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Émile, ou de l'Education, resides on an island with an older man, his tutor. The young Émile is being raised on the island, seeing only his tutor. Aside from receiving instruction from his tutor, Émile's education comes largely from his surroundings—his immediate contact with the world of nature, which helps to form his senses and personality. In this vignette, Émile is engaged in kite flying.*

*Émile's rearing on a desolate island represents the very essence of Rousseau's educational philosophy. Rousseau believed that children's early learning should be the result of their interactions with the world rather than of their engagement with books. In the case of Émile, a simple kite-flying activity affords him the opportunity to develop his sensibilities relative to his surroundings. While flying a kite, his tutor asks him to determine the kite's relative position by simply looking at the shadow that the kite casts on the sand. Émile does so successfully, a result of his evolved understanding of his physical world.*

The above vignette is inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's novel, *Emile, ou de l'Education*. Rousseau, one of early childhood education's earliest philosophers, was clearly ahead of his time. His literary work *Émile*, though written in the form of a novel for the purpose of entertaining, was actually a compendium of wide-ranging aspects of child rearing and education. As depicted above, Rousseau's character, Émile, was raised on an island in isolation. The novel clearly conveyed Rousseau's belief that, until the age of about 12, "education ought to be purely negative. It consists neither in teaching virtue nor truth; but in guarding the heart from vice and the mind from error" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 42). Rousseau contended that by "attempting nothing in the beginning, you might produce a prodigy of education" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 42). Rousseau's novel was one of the first depictions of the first 5 years of life, and it clearly distinguished young children from earlier portrayals of them as miniature adults or embodiments of original sin.

This chapter examines the historical roots of current practice in the field of early childhood education. By examining the people and events from the past that have been instrumental in shaping early childhood educational theory and practice as we know it today, you will develop a deeper understanding of and an enhanced appreciation for this exciting field.

## Key Elements for Becoming a Professional

### NAEYC DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRINCIPLE 2

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

#### Interpretation

Young children's development is orderly and predictable. The early pioneers of early childhood education discussed in this chapter have made significant contributions to our understanding of children's development over time and what constitutes best practices at every turn in their developmental sequence.

### NAEYC STANDARD 1: PROMOTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- a. Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs
- b. Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on development and learning
- c. Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments

## WHAT MAJOR IDEAS INFLUENCED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

From the very beginning, the ideas emanating from key political leaders, teachers, and philosophers have influenced the history of early childhood education. In the subsequent paragraphs, you will acquire an appreciation for the cyclical and transformative aspects of history and their impact on early childhood education.

### Ancient Educational Theorists

There is a tendency to think that early childhood education is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western civilization. Actually, today's education practices are much older than you think, dating as far back as antiquity. We can find the remnants of early childhood philosophical thought dated as far back as Athens, Greece, and strands of educational thinking and practice in the written scrolls of ancient Judea. Historically, the need for formal education was twofold: first, to maintain more stable, orderly, and viable communities of men; and second, to assist humankind in its quest of becoming more self-actualized, to experience personal fulfillment, and to be more attuned to God (Braun & Edwards, 1972).

History conveys to us, and it is still the case today, that there exist two competing ideas regarding education at any level: the importance of meeting the needs of the individual versus meeting the needs of society as a whole. As far back as we can go, the politics and curricula of any given era challenged educators' ability to bring the two ideas to fruition simultaneously.

Greek philosophers **Plato** (428–348 B.C.) and **Aristotle** (384–322 B.C.) also struggled with this dilemma. Both Plato and Aristotle upheld Greek intellectual society views, placing a great deal of emphasis on man as inherently good and capable of gaining personal fulfillment by simply adhering to the laws of life within the context of a good society. Plato's educational ideas were lofty and theoretical, with very little connection to the concerns of everyday life. On the other hand, Aristotle was more practical in his thinking, an advocate of a more individualized and diverse educational system. Aristotle believed, unlike his predecessor Plato, that education was the right of ordinary male offspring of the free citizens of the state and not just the right of the upper class, as was the case in Plato's utopian society. Yet, it is important to note that neither Plato nor Aristotle dealt with early childhood education as a separate category. But Plato, a student of the great philosopher Socrates, spoke passionately about youth as a special time of development in his *Republic*: "You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 13). The appreciation of early childhood education as a special case would come much later in history.

### The Dark and Middle Ages

The Romans, on the other hand, did very little to enhance Greek educational thought. But one Roman, **Plutarch** (A.D. 46–120), wrote about the need for a more humane treatment of children during that period, an idea that was not necessarily upheld by the Greeks. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe literally sunk into ruins. It was then that the very notion of childhood was also lost. Not only was there no specific emphasis on early childhood education, but young children wore the garments of adults, assumed adultlike chores, and participated in adult activities. For more

than 1,000 years, Europe was school-less and, from a conceptual point of view, childless as well. These were, indeed, the very dark Middle Ages. For several years following the collapse, church doctrine was the focal point, projecting a vastly discrepant image of human nature. Children, therefore, were seen as inherently evil, and bodily punishment was deemed suitable for both body and soul. The innocence and special needs of the young were suspended until the time of Europe's great transformation—a time of great enlightenment, pride, and magnificence known as the Renaissance (Braun & Edwards, 1972; Weber, 1984).

The ancient Greeks' *paideia*, or process of education and child rearing, underscored the dichotomy between the children's world and the world of adults, ushering in altered views of childhood. But medieval society failed to perceive childhood as a distinct period and gave no real thought to the importance of a transitional period. However, it was during the Renaissance that the concept of childhood began to emerge. Philippe Aries's *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) gave rise to a paradigm shift regarding children's place in society. Aries chronicled the changing attitudes toward the very young, which were becoming evident in art, religion, iconography, and literature. By the 16th or 17th century, children were given a special costume to distinguish them from adults—especially male children. Newly written material portrayed the child's sweetness, and adults began to derive pleasure from observing childhood antics (Weber, 1984). Writings of adults engaged in behavior as natural as the "coddling" of children gave rise to the changing view of children as a special case and distinct from adults.

## WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE INDIVIDUALS MADE TO THE FIELD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Plato's *Republic*, often referred to as one of the most significant works analyzing politics and education, has made an indelible imprint on the thinking of early education pioneers for centuries. It has been said that every major philosopher since Plato's time has been heavily influenced by his insights in some shape or form (Braun & Edwards, 1972). The contributions made to education by countless men and women during the post-Plato era cannot be understated. Educational practices and philosophies during the days of old have proven to be reliable—and they have stood the test of time. Such principles still govern our practices in the early childhood classroom today.



### Professionalism & Policy

The issue of whether or not early childhood education should focus on children's needs or the needs of the state continues to loom large in today's political circles. Conservatives contend that the raising of children should be the exclusive province of parents, and liberals argue that early care and education is the inalienable right of all children—Black, White, rich, and poor. But early care and education as a public entitlement raises

### Who Should Care for America's Children?

concerns relative to the national debt, national security, equity, access, depleting resources, and so on. This great debate is an issue of ideology and challenges government's legitimate role in advancing the growth and well-being of children, promoting a shared culture and human capital for employees, and finally as the great equalizer in society (Zigler, Gilliam, & Barnett, 2011).





Children were often depicted as miniature adults during the Middle Ages.

quite nonconventional; his ideas about education were surprisingly liberal. Born in Germany, Martin Luther was raised in a deeply religious home; his parents were strict disciplinarians who valued hard work (Frost, 1966). Martin Luther studied religion and related subject matter throughout his early years and during his pursuit of higher education, becoming an ordained priest in 1507 and eventually earning a doctorate in theology.

Luther urged nobles, civil leaders, and laypeople to move away from the church and instead focus on a “more personal road to God and salvation” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 25), which got Martin Luther into serious trouble with church authorities. In the year following his excommunication from the church, Martin Luther translated the Bible into High German because he believed that people should read the Bible for themselves in order to come to their own conclusions about what God intended. This effort made the Bible more accessible to the people and freed them from relying solely on priests to interpret God’s message (Braun & Edwards, 1972; Frost, 1966).

In his educational writings, Martin Luther proposed three novel ideas about education. First, people needed to find their own way to God by reading the Bible for themselves (Braun & Edwards, 1972). This idea presupposed the need for the population to be literate and led to Luther advocating for the education of the entire population, including girls as well as boys. Second, Martin Luther believed that all towns and villages should have schools (Braun & Edwards, 1972) and that these schools should be governed by the state and not by the church—thereby creating a system that would support the development of morality and increase the stability of the state, simultaneously. Third, while Luther *did* stress the importance of religious instruction in schools, he promoted the idea that in order to ensure that educated people became good citizens, it was also important for schools to support children’s intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development (Braun & Edwards, 1972). Martin Luther also advocated for adult continuing education, thereby urging authorities that there was a need for libraries.

## Renaissance and Reformation

Needless to say, the Renaissance and Reformation period was a unique and special time in European history. Brave “men of the cloth” like Luther, Erasmus, and others were quite instrumental in using their influence and novel ideas relative to religiosity and faith to usher in a period during which the view of the young child was greatly ameliorated.

## European Influences

The upheavals and struggles of European society in the early 16th century were unprecedented. The societal landscape was one of sheer chaos; congregations were against clergy, and peasants were against the ruling classes. It was necessary for members of society to engage in spiritual introspection; men, women, boys, and girls were charged by their religious authorities to move toward a more personal relationship with God. This would require that individuals learn to read the Bible and participate in formal schooling. Religious leaders during this era were instrumental in broadening the purpose of education beyond the religious. In the pages to follow, you will see the significant role that the church (religion) played in the history of early childhood education and the evolution of the concept of childhood.

## Martin Luther

By the early 16th century, a young religious leader emerged by the name of **Martin Luther** (1483–1546), who proclaimed a type of doctrine that was



Although the ideas that Luther put forth in his educational writings were considered radical for his time, they had an enormous impact on the people in authority who, for the first time, listened and implemented his ideas. People everywhere joined Martin Luther's cause, resulting in Germany having "the most complete public school system to exist in any country before the nineteenth century" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, pp. 25–26).

## Erasmus

**Erasmus** (1466–1536), Martin Luther's contemporary, was instrumental in ushering in a more humanistic way of instructing young children. His doctrine emphasized the "here and now" and was less focused on preparing the soul for eternity; preparation for life in the world became paramount. A professor of divinity at Cambridge University in England, Erasmus was initially regarded as Martin Luther's ally, but soon became his staunch enemy. Erasmus firmly believed that human beings need to develop within the context of culture and proposed that there were three conditions that determined individual progress: (a) nature, (b) training, and (c) practice. Erasmus's thinking laid the groundwork for a very enlightened 18th century; emphasis was on viewing human life from a very humanistic perspective, which emphasizes the "here and now."

## John Amos Comenius

Moravian Bishop **John Amos Comenius's** (1592–1670) contribution to education came during a time of great upheaval and religious reformation in European society. Thanks to him and the religious reformation movement, civil control over education and educational accessibility for all classes of people increased (Weber, 1984). Comenius was born in southeastern Moravia (Czech Republic) to a family who had gained membership in the Moravian Brethren (Frost, 1966). Orphaned at an early age, Comenius went to live with his aunt in Strážnice and attended a "folk school," where he learned some arithmetic, Czech language, and catechism. It was due to Comenius's early personal experiences that he first began to "despise" the teaching methods used in schools. Comenius described the methods as "so severe that schools have been looked on as terrors for boys and slaughterhouses of the mind" (Frost, 1966, p. 221). His next encounter with schooling solidified this thinking; at 16, John Amos Comenius attended a Latin school at Píseň where he was required to study with 6- and 7-year-old boys.

Despite the inadequacies of his early education, at age 20, Comenius decided to attend the college in Nassau, Germany, to become a minister (Frost, 1966, p. 221), where he became interested in educational reform. After pursuing his studies, Comenius returned to Moravia and was ordained a priest in 1616. This was also the period of the Thirty Years' War, which was a vicious war between the Catholics and the Protestants. The defeat of the Protestants led to the religious persecution of all non-Catholics, especially the Moravian Brethren of which Comenius was a member. As a result, Comenius fled from Bohemia in 1626 "to become a schoolmaster, writer, and bishop of the Moravian communities, which had found refuge in Poland" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 30). In 1638, Comenius was asked to come to Sweden to devise a complete educational system, which spanned the early years through young adulthood (the university years). After a brief stint in Europe, Comenius returned to Sweden where he spent several years writing textbooks for the schools. By that time, "Comenius had become the most sought-after educator in all Europe . . . and he was in correspondence with scholars and educators in both Europe and America" (Frost, 1966, p. 222).



During the 16th century, Martin Luther, single-handedly, ushered in the idea of public education in Europe.

Comenius spent the last years of his life in Amsterdam where he died in 1670, leaving a collection of work, books and manuscripts detailing his philosophical approach to education (Braun & Edwards, 1972; Weber, 1984).

Comenius broadened the aim of education beyond religious goals; he believed that in order for children to develop human nature and to be prepared for their life on earth, as well as for eternal life, children needed to be educated. According to Comenius, education should begin at birth and should be made accessible to all children, “rich and poor, male and female, bright and dull” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 30). Comenius’s writings offer insight into how young children learn and how they should be taught, including the idea that schools should strive to use methods in “which the teachers teach less and the learners learn more” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 31). His most influential books include *The School of Infancy*, *Didactica Magna (The Great Didactic)*, and *Orbis Sensualium Pictus (The World in Pictures)* (Frost, 1966, pp. 224–225).

In *The School of Infancy*, Comenius introduces the idea that home is “the first school.” Comenius believed that it was important for mothers to recognize this so that they could take advantage of the opportunity to “begin their children’s education correctly” (Frost, 1966, p. 225). Comenius stressed the importance of allowing young children to learn through experiences and activities that coincided with their interests and level of ability.

In *The Great Didactic*, Comenius offers his thoughts on how children grow and develop as well as how they should be taught in schools (Frost, 1966, p. 224). In this great work, outlined in Table 2.1, Comenius lays out nine important principles for instruction of young children.

*The World in Pictures* emphasizes Principle 7, which states that learning occurs best when everything is related to the senses. The aim of writing this book was to “make the meaning of the words visual” (Frost, 1966, p. 224). In it, pictures of objects were paired with the word for the object as well as a story about the objects in the picture. Comenius believed that this approach was far more effective than simply asking children to learn the names of objects out of context. Not only did Comenius believe that all senses should be engaged in the educational process; he also contended that the best way to learn anything was by doing it.

**Table 2.1** Comenius’s Principles of Instruction

1. It must begin early and before the mind is corrupted.
2. The mind must be made ready for it.
3. It must proceed from the general to the particular.
4. It must proceed from the easier to the more difficult.
5. Progress must not be rushed.
6. The minds of individuals must not be forced to do anything but that to which they aspire according to their age and motivation.
7. Everything must be related through sense impression, if possible.
8. Everything must be applied immediately.
9. Everything must be taught consistently according to one and the same method.

Source: Ulich (1954), as quoted in Braun and Edwards (1972, p. 33).



## Consider This The Past as Prologue

One crucial area of knowledge needed to become an effective early childhood educator is a firm understanding of the origins of this branch of education. It has been frequently said that “it is impossible to know where you are going unless you know from whence you came.” In every aspect of life, progress can become stagnant, and setbacks are likely to recur unless one has a firm grasp of past actions and their results. Effective practice in the field of early childhood education is predicated on teachers’ understanding of history and a firm

understanding of the interplay among social, political, economic, and educational influences.

How do you think the politics and economics of the past decade are impacting the educational ideology of today? When you consider the historical contributions of Martin Luther, Erasmus, and Comenius to the field of early childhood education, how do you think the education of young children will be influenced by the social and political climate created by today’s leaders?

### John Locke

Not too long after the death of Comenius, **John Locke** (1632–1704) wrote *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which became a popular read in 1693. While Locke’s writings have long been associated with the idea of the newborn child as a **tabula rasa** (an earlier held view of the child’s mind as a blank slate that is sensitive and responsive to instruction), Locke also had regard for the peculiarities of the individual child. He advised parents and tutors to get to know the child; to investigate his or her interests, innate capacities, and temperament; and to devise an educational plan according to this information.

### An Improved View of Childhood

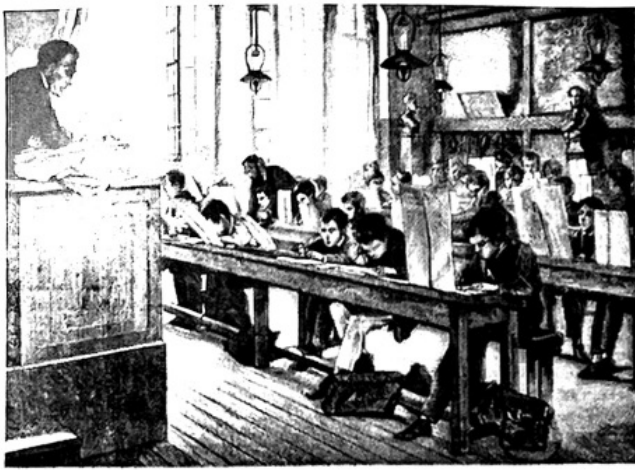
The mid-16th and 17th centuries marked the beginning of an enhanced view of childhood. For the very first time, children were being viewed as a separate and special category in human development. The new lens through which children were viewed began to spur educational practices that were in the best interests of children.

### Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712–1778) was orphaned at a very young age and sent to live with his maternal relatives. After a few failed attempts in apprenticeship training, first as a notary and then as an engraver, Rousseau ran away from Switzerland and ended up in Paris, where he started writing articles for a well-known group called the Encyclopaedists. Over the next several years, Rousseau dedicated his time to writing, and in 1762 published his most famous and influential book regarding educational theory, *Émile*, which is referenced in our opening vignette. The work is a fictional story that provides details of the education of a young boy from upper-class society. *Émile*’s focus on education in the early years was a clear departure from conventional educational thought during that time, which was purely religious authoritarianism. Hence, the church eventually attacked its content, and, as a result, the Paris Parliament condemned the book (Weber, 1984, p. 25). Fearing for his safety, Rousseau fled Paris and returned to Switzerland. Upon voicing his criticism of those who disagreed with the ideas put forth in *Émile*, the Swiss government also condemned the book, and once again, fearing for his life, Rousseau fled the country and settled in London in 1765.

Although Rousseau received very little formal schooling, his ideas about how children should be raised, as put forth in his book *Émile*, have had a significant influence on education. Often labeled





Education historians often used the term *tabula rasa* or *empty slate* as a metaphor to describe educators' thinking regarding the state of children's minds during Locke's time.

the “father” of modern child psychology, Rousseau believed that all children were born “innately moral” and that their inherited nature determined the progress of their development (Thomas, 2000, p. 44). According to Rousseau, the role of the adult or teacher was (a) to protect children from the “vices” of society and (b) to provide an environment that supported the stage of development that children were in so that they were able to develop to their potential (Frost, 1966, p. 294). Interestingly, though, “Rousseau abandoned his own children to a foundling hospital” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 40).

According to Rousseau, there exist four stages of development through which children progress. However, only the first two stages are applicable to our discussion here (Frost, 1966, p. 295). In the first stage, from birth to age 5, the educational focus should be on motor activity, physical development, sense perception, children’s individual development, and abandonment of the idea that children act morally or socially (Frost, 1966). In the second stage, from age 5 to age 12, the focus should be on the child deriving learning from the environment, which is motivated by “the demands of his nature at the time, not by the requirements of others” (Frost, 1966, p. 296).

Rousseau was among the first individuals to acknowledge that young children were not simply “miniature adults” and among the first to introduce the idea of “stages” in development (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 43) as well as the idea that children should only learn what they are ready to learn.

## The Beginning Point for Early Childhood Education

Thanks to Rousseau’s view of childhood as a very distinct period in human development, the beginning point of early childhood education emerged, followed by a wellspring of unique educational approaches and experiences geared specifically toward society’s youngest citizens.

### Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

Educator and theorist **Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi** (1746–1827), born in Zurich, Switzerland, did not begin elementary school until he was 9 years old. He did not enjoy school and preferred to spend most of his time with his grandfather, who was a pastor who spent most of his time ministering to the poor. As a result of his early experiences, Pestalozzi developed a strong sense of compassion for the poor as well as a great desire to help others (Frost, 1966). During his early tenure as a minister, Pestalozzi read some of Rousseau’s books, becoming a supporter of his educational and political theories (Frost, 1966).

In order to make money for his family, Pestalozzi began writing *Leonard and Gertrude*, which was successful as a novel but not as a “work on education and social uplift” (Frost, 1966, p. 348), which is what Pestalozzi had intended it to be. Nevertheless, Pestalozzi continued his forays into writing in spite of this, eventually becoming a schoolmaster. Pestalozzi expanded the work of Rousseau, and although his methods were criticized, he made significant progress with the children in his role as schoolmaster. Pestalozzi and his friends organized the Society of the Friends of Education to make people aware of his theories and methodologies. In an effort to achieve his life’s goal, Pestalozzi wrote “an exposition of his philosophy of education and methodology, which he titled *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*” (Frost, 1966, p. 350).

“Pestalozzi represents a beginning point for early childhood education [as] he actually taught young children” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 45). Like Rousseau before him, Pestalozzi believed that education should follow the natural development of the child and that instruction should not require more or less than the child is capable of handling (Frost, 1966). Pestalozzi’s focus on proceeding from the concrete to the abstract and from the particular to the general was a way of placing

instruction in sync with the child's development (Weber, 1984). Only after learning in this concrete way is a child ready to move on to learning more abstract concepts. For example, Pestalozzi believed that in order for children to learn to read, they must start by learning the letters, then syllables, and then words. Once children have mastered these concepts, they can move on to understand that words strung together have meaning (Frost, 1966).

As an early pioneer in the field of early childhood education, Pestalozzi was destined to change the educational thinking and practice of the Western world. To Pestalozzi's everlasting credit, educational equality did not constitute educational uniformity; he believed in education for all yet deeply understood the idiosyncrasies of the individual learner and the unique role that human nature plays in the life of each learner.

## Friedrich Froebel

Born in Oberweissbach, a village in East Germany, **Friedrich Froebel's** (1782–1852) early childhood was one of neglect, frustration, and loneliness (Frost, 1966). He lost his mother at the tender age of 9 months and felt neglected by his father. When his father attempted to indoctrinate Froebel with his teachings, “he found the boy dull and placed Froebel in the girls division of the village school” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 62). At age 10, Froebel went to live with his maternal uncle where he experienced affectionate understanding and was able to catch up academically. Froebel attended several universities, studying a variety of subjects, including architectural design. Later employed by the Frankfurt Model School, Froebel was given the opportunity to study a brief course in Pestalozzi's educational approach. Froebel, like Pestalozzi, respected the dignity of children and wanted to establish an educational program that provided children with emotional stability. But unlike Pestalozzi, Froebel opposed the authoritative and regimented aspects of Pestalozzi's teachings. In 1816, Froebel established the Universal German Educational Institute, a Pestalozzian-type school in a small village called Keilhau, where he remained until 1829. From the period 1831 to 1837, Froebel went on to establish an institute and administered an orphanage and a boarding school in various places in Europe.

In 1837, Froebel returned to Germany to establish a new early childhood school, a type of child's garden for 3- and 4-year-old children, ushering in the **kindergarten** movement, which was not yet named. Incorporating the use of play, games, stories, and activities, the kindergarten was seen as an educational environment in which children could develop in the right direction, according to the divine laws of human growth. Froebel's study of architectural design would serve him well in the design of the gifts and occupations that eventually became a part of the kindergarten curriculum. Froebel's reputation as an early childhood educator grew, and soon kindergartens began to spring up throughout Germany. However, Froebel was soon accused of spreading atheism and socialism by the Prussian minister at the time, and kindergartens were ultimately banned throughout Prussia. Although kindergartens still existed in other German states, they did not return to Prussia until the 1860s, after Froebel's death. But by the late 19th century, kindergartens began to appear throughout Europe and North America.

Froebel's major contributions to the field of early education came during a period in Europe often referred to as the Age of Reason—a time when intellectual curiosity surpassed religious dogma. In Froebel's literary work, *The Education of Man*, which focused on distinct periods of childhood between the ages of 7 and 10, Froebel outlined his premise for education: (a) All existence originates from God; (b) humans possess an inherent spiritual essence, which is the vitalizing force that spurs development; and (c) all humans are connected by their ideas—they are a part of a grand scheme that exists in the universe. Froebel contended that the child, at birth, has an internal spiritual essence that is driven by self-activity, and that development follows a special process of unfolding. According to Froebel, kindergarten should promote self-actualization in children. He claimed that the kindergarten gifts and occupations (described in Figure 2.1) and children's sociocultural experiences, especially play, work together in the life of a child to bring self-actualization to fruition.

Froebel would be the first early childhood educator to place a strong emphasis on the value of play in the life of the young child. Froebel contended that play allowed children to express their innermost needs, desires, and thoughts and was a means by which children sought to imitate adult vocational activities and socializations.

As a part of the kindergarten curriculum, Froebel developed a series of “gifts” and “occupations” for the kindergartener. Figure 2.1 delineates **Froebel’s gifts**, each of which had its own physical appearance and symbolic meaning.

The gifts progressed from the simple and undifferentiated to the more complex. Based on the principle of synthesis of opposites, Froebel’s cylinders represented the integration of the sphere and cube. The various cubes and their subdivisions were used to assist children in creating geometrical and architectural designs. The sticks and rings provided children practice at exercising their small muscles and coordinating hand-eye movements, and they also provided the basis for early drawing and writing.

The occupations consisted of artifacts such as pencils, wood, sand, clay, straw, and sticks for construction purposes. Kindergarten activities also included a collection of games, songs, and stories designed to promote children’s sensory and physical development. Teachers would often present the occupations to groups of children using hand motions and rhythmic songs. This marked the birth of what is now called “circle time” in many of today’s early childhood programs. Overall, Froebel’s kindergarten was designed to convey basic ideas about the unity of the world to young children (Braun & Edwards, 1972; Lawrence, 1969; Lilley, 1967; Spodek, 1986).

## European Women Who Influenced Early Childhood Education

Throughout history, women have played a crucial role in influencing the trajectory of early childhood education. The following pages speak of a few female trailblazers in the field of early childhood education to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

### Margaret McMillan

Margaret McMillan (1860–1931) was born in Westchester County, New York, after her parents had emigrated to the United States in 1840 from Inverness, Scotland. As an adult, Margaret lived in London and worked sporadically as a governess while also being active in the suffrage and socialist movements, along with her sister, Rachel (Braun & Edwards, 1972; see also Chapter 3). In 1893, she was elected to the school board in Bradford, England. It was in this position that McMillan discovered her interests in improving the health problems of children. As a school board member, McMillan pushed for “medical inspection of school children, school baths, and other causes” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127).

A few years later, Margaret and Rachel moved to Deptford and “started a day and night camp school” for children who were sick. They were “appalled by the rickety legs, lice, scabies, and impetigo in children, which they saw as evidence of neglect for the children growing up in Great Britain” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127). After working with these children, they decided that by the time the children were school-aged, their health problems were too advanced. Believing that they could prevent children from becoming gravely ill, the sisters turned their attention to younger children and opened an “open-air nursery school” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127). Just 3 years after opening the school, Rachel died. With a strong belief in what they were trying to accomplish, “[Margaret] McMillan continued their work . . . training teachers, promoting nursery schools, and writing political tracts until her own death in 1931” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127).



**Figure 2.1****Froebel's Kindergarten Gifts**

|         |                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gift 1  | • Six soft, colored balls                                                                 |    |
| Gift 2  | • A wooden sphere, cube, and cylinder                                                     |    |
| Gift 3  | • A large cube divided into 8 smaller cubes                                               |    |
| Gift 4  | • A large cube divided into 8 oblong blocks                                               |    |
| Gift 5  | • A large cube divided into 21 whole, 6 half, and 12 quarter cubes                        |    |
| Gift 6  | • A large cube divided into 18 whole oblongs: 3 divided lengthwise; 3 divided breadthwise |    |
| Gift 7  | • Quadrangle and triangle tablets for arranging figures                                   |   |
| Gift 8  | • Splints of various lengths                                                              |  |
| Gift 9  | • Small points in various materials                                                       |  |
| Gift 10 | • Sticks for outlining figures, and connectors                                            |  |

Source: Used by permission of Scott Bultman, Froebel Foundation USA, <http://www.froebelfoundation.org>

The open-air nursery school had “one side open to the elements in order to let the sun shine in” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127). It was intended mainly to be an outdoor center where children could play in the sandbox, the gardens, and the “junk heap (piles of coal ashes, old nuts and bolts, etc.)” (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 127). The school served children ages 1 to 6 years old. Devoted to the idea of improving the health problems of young children, McMillan ensured that the children were provided with baths, clean clothes, nourishing meals, and medical and dental care. McMillan also believed that it was important to provide children with “cognitive stimulation” as well as to foster their emotional development.

Margaret McMillan discounted the idea that children should be instructed on an individual basis and insisted that children participate in group experiences (Braun & Edwards, 1972). Margaret McMillan also valued children’s art; she encouraged drawing because she thought that children’s “spontaneous drawings of what had been remembered” provided valuable information to the teacher (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 130). It allowed the teacher to obtain an understanding of what a child

deemed important enough to remember and what he or she did not, thus providing information about the child's development.

Another important aspect of McMillan's educational philosophy was her emphasis on parent involvement. McMillan held monthly group meetings where mothers could talk about their children and teachers could listen and suggest "child rearing methods and games that the mother might introduce to the child" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 129). She also required that the teachers make home visits so that they could learn more about a family's history and roots. By cultivating strong relationships with families through meetings and home visitation, she hoped that the families would turn to the nursery school in times of crisis and/or illness.

McMillan's emphasis on children's health, small group work, and parent involvement is evident in early childhood programs today. The comprehensive nature of the McMillan sisters' work at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century was both intuitive and noteworthy.

## Maria Montessori

A late-19th-century Italian feminist and physician, **Maria Montessori** (1870–1952) was way ahead of her time. Growing up during this era, girls had only two career choices—to become a nun or a teacher—and Montessori didn't want to be either. Instead, she was interested in mathematics and science. Montessori was considered to be self-confident, optimistic, and greatly interested in change. After her primary schooling, Montessori began her studies in engineering and later became the first female to graduate from medical school in Italy.

In 1904, the University of Rome offered Montessori a teaching job as a professor of anthropology. She accepted, but in 1906 resigned to work with 60 young children of working families instead.

Working with these young children is where Montessori developed all of her educational methods, which became so successful that even children with learning disabilities began to pass examinations constructed for children who were "normal." Soon thereafter, Montessori started the first "Casa dei Bambini" or "Children's House" in San Lorenzo, Rome. Montessori developed a welcoming environment for the children, which included child-sized furnishings and a child-sized family room (Kramer, 1976). Montessori's pedagogy and approach were undifferentiated from her work with students who were atypically developing. However, she soon realized that children who were "normal" or typically developing did not need the direct instruction, as did the students exhibiting atypical development, to manipulate the materials. Montessori began to notice how the children would absorb knowledge almost effortlessly from their surroundings. She felt the children were teaching

themselves, which helped inspire her lifelong pursuit of educational reform. This realization became a major premise in Montessori's pedagogy—providing children the opportunity to discover and learn by manipulating the objects. Today, this technique is called the "hands-on" approach to learning.

Unlike her predecessor, Margaret McMillan, Montessori discounted the idea that children should be instructed in a group. Montessori believed that children should be given the freedom to work independently once they learned how to use the materials. Montessori gave children the freedom of independence by providing open shelves for children to select materials. Another major revolutionary change that came as a result of the Montessori methodology was her emphasis on



Maria Montessori's methodology encouraged self-regulation and independent learning in young children.

materials that induced self-discipline or self-regulation in children. Montessori was also best known for her creation of materials for sense training. According to Montessori, such materials must be simple, inherently interesting, self-correcting, and fully comprehensible to teachers (Braun & Edwards, 1972). Montessori also engaged children in real-life activities (life skills training) like washing hands, buttoning, preparing food, cleaning tables, or polishing shoes. She received worldwide attention by helping to transform an unruly group of young children into happy, calm, self-disciplined, well-behaved children. It is important to note that Montessori classrooms placed very little value on children's art, which was quite a departure from Margaret McMillan's pedagogical approach.

Montessori's pedagogy included (a) encouraging teachers to observe and pay attention to children rather than children paying attention to the teacher, (b) allowing children to work at their own pace by providing a stimulating learning environment, (c) providing teaching materials that would allow children to use their imagination, and (d) allowing children to correct their own mistakes. Montessori often reminded teachers in her courses, "When you have solved the problem of controlling the attention of the child, you have solved the entire problem of education" (Kramer, 1976, p. 217).

Montessori published many books based on her observations of children that provide guidance in how to best educate them. An insightful educator during her time, many of her observations uncover the process of how children learn. She reported that children under 6 years of age had an astonishing power of the mind, which she called the absorbent mind. She believed that children's minds resemble a sponge—they have the ability to absorb knowledge from their environments. Montessori also reported that children have sensitive phases of development in which they begin to show an interest in acquiring a particular skill.

Despite Montessori's educational genius in Europe during the 20th century, her influence in the United States was short-lived because, with the range of several emerging psychological and learning theories, some considered her ideas far-fetched. Nonetheless, Montessori schools began to reappear in the mid-1950s (Braun & Edwards, 1972).

## Early Childhood Education Constructivists

Effective early childhood education practices are constructivist in nature. The pioneering efforts of theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky, and others have done much to up the ante with regard to quality educational programming for young children.

### Jean Piaget

**Jean Piaget** (1896–1980), born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, had a father who was a professor at the University of Neuchâtel where he taught medieval classics. Piaget deeply respected his father, and Piaget's mother was a kind person who, sadly, struggled with neuroticism. Piaget adopted his scientific perspective from an early age; he was always engaged in scientific pursuits. Piaget had many interests, including birds, seashells, and mechanics. At age 10, Piaget published his first work when a local natural history journal printed a paper he had written on a partly albino sparrow (Miller, 2002). Later, Piaget's work at a local museum, which consisted of cataloging mollusks, resulted in a series of published papers on mollusks.

Piaget pursued his studies in the natural sciences, receiving his bachelor's degree at the age of 18 and a doctoral degree at the young age of 21. Despite the fact that he had devoted his graduate studies to biology, Piaget found that he did not want to spend his life conducting research in this field. Instead, he decided to pursue postdoctoral studies in psychology. Piaget's later studies in psychology afforded him the opportunity to work in the laboratory of Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon, the developers of the intelligence test. During his testing of children, Piaget began to try out the psychiatric (clinical) interviewing techniques he had learned, and children's responses intrigued



him. As Piaget administered the test to the children, and followed up their answers with probing questions, he found their responses to be nothing short of astonishing—magical and unrealistic. Piaget used this technique of posing questions and encouraging children to explain their answers, commonly referred to as the **clinical interview method**, throughout the remainder of his career.

Because Piaget was among the first to propose a stage model of cognitive development, his perspective on children's learning has had an enduring impact on the way we view children. Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor period (0–2 years old), preoperational period (2–7 years old), concrete operational period (7–12 years old), and formal operational period (12 years old to adulthood).

In addition to the concept of stages, several other important aspects of Piaget's cognitive theory of development have influenced the field of early childhood education. Piaget's theory was often considered a **constructivist** theory because it posits that children need to actively participate (construct their own learning) in the environment in order to learn. His theory also suggests that children do not require outside motivation to do this; rather they have an innate drive to explore and interact with their surroundings. As "little scientists," they will investigate, hypothesize about, and experiment with the materials available to them (Miller, 2002). Piaget believed that teachers need to design the environment to capitalize on the intrinsic motivation that children have to explore and interact with the world around them. According to Piaget, teachers should mainly provide "guidance and resources so that children can teach themselves" (Miller, 2002, p. 73).

Over the course of his life, Piaget is estimated to have written more than 100 articles and more than 40 books on child psychology alone (Miller, 2002), making him one of the world's most prolific modern contributors to children's thinking. Jean Piaget's contribution to the field of early childhood education is unprecedented. Very well respected by his psychology colleagues, Piaget remains one of the most celebrated giants and influential figures in the fields of both early childhood education and psychology. (See Chapter 4 for a more extensive explanation of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development.)

## Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky

**Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky** (1896–1934) was born to a large, intellectual Jewish family in Russia. Vygotsky studied law, literature, philosophy, psychology, and social science at universities in Moscow. Vygotsky's early encounter with children with congenital defects such as blindness, deafness, and mental retardation helped to pique his interest in medicine, which led him to undertake several years of medical training (Miller, 2002).

The development of Vygotsky's theory needs to be understood in the historical context of the post-Revolutionary zeal to create novel ways of thinking and living in Russia. Vygotsky and his colleagues set out to construct a new psychology based on **Marxism** (social, political, and economic policies derived from socialist principles and advocated by Karl Marx during the 19th century) following the Russian Revolution. Vygotsky's goal was to link the ideas about the politics and economics of Marx and Engels (a German socialist leader and close associate of Marx) to psychology. Referred to as a sociocultural theorist, Vygotsky asserted that human beings were embedded in the sociocultural context and that it is virtually impossible to explain human cognition or thought independent of the individual's context. Vygotsky recognized that learning takes place within the context of relationships and underscored the vital role that adults and peers play in the development of cognition.

One of the most well-known concepts of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is the **zone of proximal development (ZPD)**, which can be defined as the difference between what children can do independently and what they can achieve with adult assistance and guidance. Related to the notion of the ZPD is the idea of **scaffolding**, which has often been used to help illustrate this concept. In much the same way as a scaffold extends the work of a builder or a painter, adults and peers extend the growth and learning of children through modeling, encouragement, discussion, joint participation, leading questions, and verbal prompts (Miller, 2002). Vygotsky also emphasized

the important link between thinking and language—that language, as a cultural tool, transforms and influences thinking.

Unfortunately, at the end of his career, Vygotsky had fallen victim to political strife and was blacklisted under Stalin's rule (Miller, 2002, p. 371). But Vygotsky remained involved in psychology and education for the remainder of his life, which was cut short at the age of 37 by tuberculosis. However, by that time, Vygotsky had already published more than 180 works, presented extensive lectures to students and colleagues, and compiled extensive data from his research.

The basic tenets of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory—including the notion that children develop within the context of relationships with adults and peers, the idea of the ZPD or the scaffolding of children's development, and the belief that language precedes the development of more advanced thought—have contributed significantly to the practice of early childhood education. (See Chapter 4 for more information on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development.)

## The Progressive Education Movement

By the early 20th century, educational thought had progressed considerably, and the public schools were confronted with their first great challenge: to educate the streams of immigrant children coming to the shores of America. Sound familiar? The father of progressive education, John Dewey, and his followers were espousing a new type of educational reform—an educational methodology that was grounded in the ideals and principles of democracy. Dewey's educational approach would emphasize growth, interaction, continuity, and unity. He placed a great deal of emphasis on connecting the child to his or her experiences but, more importantly, the school to society.

## American Influences

American educational thought, having its antecedents and being well steeped in European society and history, was heavily influenced by the tenor of the times. In the pages to follow, you will learn about the unprecedented work of American educators and their marked influence on the field of early childhood education.

### John Dewey

**John Dewey** (1859–1952) was the third of four sons, born to Archibald and Lucina Dewey, in the town of Burlington, Vermont, on October 20, 1859. Given the prestigious family background of Dewey's mother, Dewey grew up among adults who imposed great expectations on him. Consequently, Dewey graduated from high school at the age of 15 and pursued college, graduating in 1879. Following his graduation from college, Dewey continued to work as a high school teacher for 2 years and, in 1882, pursued graduate study in philosophy and psychology at Johns Hopkins University, graduating in 1884. During his 2 years of study, Dewey worked with G. Stanley Hall in physiological psychology. In the years to follow, Dewey taught philosophy and psychology at institutions of higher education, until securing a teaching position at Columbia University, where he remained until his death in 1952.

During the period of 1880 to 1920, the United States was experiencing a significant increase in immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, giving rise to widespread poverty. These conditions resulted in the progressive education movement, a groundswell of social and educational reforms led by John Dewey and other progressive educators. These educators, who focused on the social consciousness of education, contended that the rich and poor could learn from one another and that the same education opportunities should be available to all.

Dewey's ideas concerning education were fresh and intriguing to 20th-century educators; his educational philosophy touted the need to get rid of rote memorization in schools and to replace it with a more cooperative, child-centered approach, which stressed each child's individuality, creative

expression, social interaction, discovery learning, and validation of emotions (Cremin, 1965; Graham, 1967). Dewey also believed that a child's family, school, and surrounding community were responsible for supporting his or her education, which is in sync with today's popular cliché "It takes a village to raise a child." Dewey asserted that children learn best when cooperatively engaged in real-life activities with their peers and that experimentation was more conducive to knowledge acquisition than rote memorization (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2004). Furthermore, Dewey purported that the role of the teacher was not to impose education on children but rather to observe children's activities in order to better understand their unique interests, and to guide their activities to support the process of learning.

Dewey diverged from the traditional perspective of early education as proposed by Froebel and reorganized the structure of the kindergarten classroom to emphasize a cooperative learning environment in which children actively participated in making decisions regarding daily learning activities (Peltzman, 1998). The Froebelian kindergarten, you may remember, focused on symbolism, play, unity, and imitation, while Dewey's approach emphasized experiences and methods that were more relevant to children's everyday existence. Dewey believed that teachers should use creative methods when instructing young children in order to better support children's independent problem-solving capabilities. Dewey's classroom was organized to allow children to direct the sequence of activities, while teachers supported their learning through the provision of learning experiences

such as field trips, art, and music. Teachers fostered children's developing social skills through having children interact with their peers. Children's self-initiated activities promoted the internal motivation for them to learn more about formal subjects taught in school, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

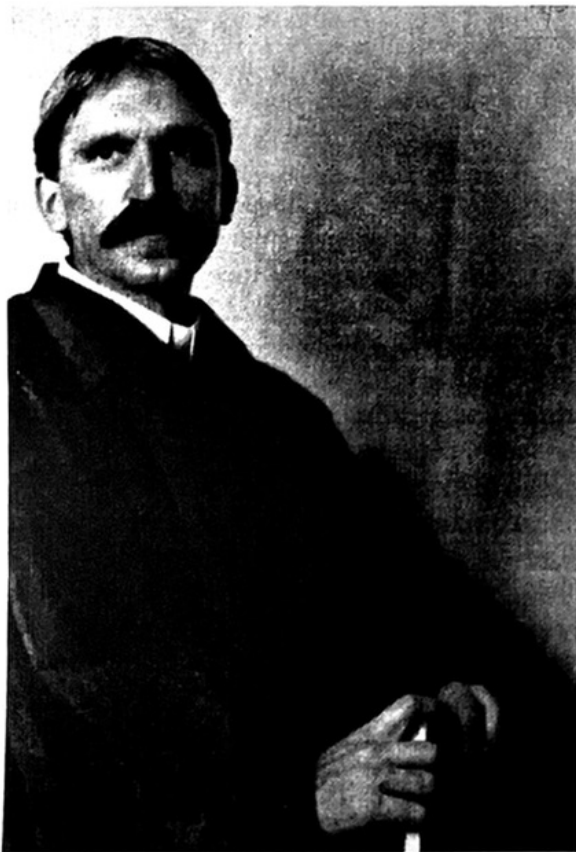
Dewey's educational dogma focused on bringing the school closer to life. Because his era was a time of educational inequality, Dewey espoused democratizing culture, and the need for a new socialized education system—education for everyone—ideas that remain relevant for today's educational landscape.

## Lucy Sprague Mitchell

**Lucy Sprague Mitchell** (1878–1967), who was born to a wealthy Chicago family, did not attend formal schooling until the age of 16 due to suffering from an uncontrollable nervous condition. Introduced to John Dewey by her influential father as a young teenager, Mitchell was soon active in the social reform of Dewey and his followers, negating her own upper-class status. Mitchell was largely self-educated before college but attended Radcliffe as an undergraduate, graduating with honors in 1900 with a degree in philosophy (Antler, 1987). Mitchell later worked at the University of California, Berkeley, as the first dean of female students.

After marrying and relocating to New York City, Mitchell joined Columbia University. As a devotee of Dewey's philosophy, Mitchell was interested in children and research, which led her to work in conjunction with another colleague, Harriet Johnson, to establish the Bureau of Educational Experiments (known today as the Bank Street College of Education). The bureau was a laboratory for testing progressive education

principles and studying children's learning. The bureau also sponsored a teachers' college to promote progressive methods, a workshop for writers of children's literature, and a bulletin to disseminate the collaborators' findings from their research (Antler, 1987). The school that Mitchell founded was considered "developmentally appropriate" and thus served as a model for the design of subsequent early education programs in the country. Later, in the early 20th century, Mitchell



In education, John Dewey is referred to as the Father of the Progressive Movement.



# Promoting Optimal Development

## Child-Centered Teaching

Dewey was quite child-centered in his approach to education. Today, effective early childhood programs are child-centered, meaning that curricula, assessment, and teaching methodology emanate from the child. Child-centered classrooms provide constructivist learning opportunities for children; provide numerous opportunities for children to engage with their peers and adults; provide a range of learning centers that are accessible, fully equipped, and intriguing to children; provide culturally relevant

materials and experiences for children; and are led by teachers who serve as guides/facilitators and use language as a primary medium to scaffold children's development. However, early childhood educators who utilize child-centered approaches when engaging children must also recognize the value of intentional teaching. These teachers use children's leading questions, symbolic play, nonlinguistic representations, interests, and so on, in order to capitalize on a teachable moment.

and other progressives who had developed these once well-received programs for young children were labeled "flamingly radical." However, by the 1950s, these same schools became the standard for the traditional nursery schools.

We remain indebted to Mitchell and her collaborators for their life's work in the study of how children learn. Mitchell and her colleagues professionalized the field of early childhood education, and their legacy lives on in programs like Head Start and the Bank Street College of Education (Antler, 1987).

### Abigail Adams Eliot

**Abigail Adams Eliot** (1892–1992), born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, attended Winsor School, a private secondary school in Boston, and graduated in 1914 from Radcliffe College. Eliot, who began her career as a social worker, became disenchanted with the field and eventually went on to study at Oxford. Eliot studied and worked under McMillan at the Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre in London. Eliot's training there and her social work background prepared her aptly to begin a similar school in Boston, the Ruggles Street Nursery School and Training Center, located in Roxbury. Eliot went on to earn a master's degree in education in 1926 and a doctorate in education from Harvard University in 1930.

The nursery school movement—which was closely linked to three fields: home economics, social work, and education—was launched in the United States in the early 20th century. Early nursery training centers emphasized good health and hygiene for children, education for better mothering, and education and habit training through play. Eliot is probably best known as the founder of the 20th-century nursery school movement. One year after Eliot and her cofounder, philanthropist Elizabeth W. Pearson, began the Ruggles Street Nursery School, a group of mothers formed a cooperative called the Cambridge Nursery School. Eliot was very instrumental in this effort, and soon nursery schools were popping up everywhere (Braun & Edwards, 1972). The Cambridge Nursery School later changed its name to the Nursery Training School of Boston, and by 1931, student interns and graduate teachers were being sent for training to 40 schools around the country. The Nursery Training School later became affiliated with Tufts University and bears the name of Eliot-Pearson today.



# BEST

## Practices Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Young Children

In the early part of the 20th century, many educators in the United States deemed the nursery school movement to be a primary venue for addressing the overall health needs of young children. Today, many early childhood programs provide comprehensive care and support to young children, which include addressing the mental health and/or social emotional needs of children. Over the past 20 years, there has been increased emphasis on assessing the mental

health status of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. A range of mental health assessment tools have been devised and are currently used by both lay and mental health practitioners in many programs to determine children's mental health status. These programs recognize the importance of working with both the infant/toddler or preschooler and his or her family in order to ameliorate the child's mental health status.

During the Great Depression, Eliot served as a member of the National Advisory Committee for President Roosevelt's Federal Emergency Relief program, which sponsored emergency nursery schools for needy children. Eliot was also known as a leader in the "National Association for Nursery Schools (1926), the forerunner of the National Association for Nursery Education (1929), now known as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)" (Braun & Edwards, 1972, p. 148).

### Erik Homburger Erikson

**Erik Erikson** (1902–1994) was born near Frankfurt, Germany, an offspring of an extramarital affair. Erikson never knew his biological father and never connected to his stepfather when his mother remarried. This dynamic resulted in great family strife, causing Erikson to often feel like an outsider. As a result of a difficult childhood, Erikson entered elementary school and high school feeling conflicted about his own ethnic, religious, and familial identity, which would greatly impact Erikson's life's work. Erikson struggled with school and, after graduating from high school, attended an art school in hopes of becoming a successful artist. But his dream began to wane due to his restlessness. Erikson traveled extensively throughout Europe and would eventually meet Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna, upon a visit to Austria. As a young adult, Erikson studied psychoanalysis with Anna Freud and eventually earned certification and membership in the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. During this same period, Erikson worked at a small school and pursued studies in the Montessori method, eventually earning a certificate.

After marrying an American and fleeing Europe just prior to World War II, Erikson taught at a number of distinctive universities and professional schools in the United States such as the Harvard Medical School, the University of California, Berkeley, and the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis, to name a few. He also ran a private practice in psychoanalysis. Upon becoming a U.S. citizen, Erikson changed his last name from Homburger to Erikson. Plagued by his early struggles with personal identity, Erikson's decision to change his name was believed to be an attempt to define himself as a self-made man, thereby resolving his own personal conflict relative to identity.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development emphasized that individuals confront eight primary internal conflicts throughout the course of development that occur in response to one's maturational level and the demands imposed on oneself by societal expectations. According to Erikson, there are five psychosocial crises or conflicts that children progress through before

reaching young adulthood Erikson proposes a total of eight psychological crises that individuals undergo throughout the lifespan.) (a) trust versus mistrust (infancy); (b) autonomy versus shame and doubt (1 to 3 years of age); (c) initiative versus guilt (3 to 6 years of age); (d) industry versus inferiority (ages 6 to 12); and (e) identity versus role confusion (ages 12 to 20) (Shaffer, 2009). Erikson believed that healthy psychosocial development occurs as a result of resolving each psychosocial conflict.

Erikson's theory is significant in that it emphasizes the relationship between the child's biological maturation and the influential nature of the culture in which the child lives. Although each individual develops along the same sequence of developmental stages, each person does so in a culturally specific way (Miller, 2002). Erikson further attested that culture, itself, changes to address and support the changing needs of each consecutive generation. Erikson's perspective on the evolution of individuals' identity emphasizes the continuity of change across the life span (Miller, 2002). Thus, Erikson's emphasis on development occurring across the entire life span decreased the expectation for children to develop fully early on. Rather, Erikson was instrumental in promoting the idea that humans are a continuing work in progress, and that identity formation is achieved through a lifetime of crisis management. Erikson's method of study also encouraged future child development researchers to observe children's natural behaviors and to consider the influence of culture on developing identity within diverse contexts (Miller, 2002). (See Chapter 4 for a more extensive account of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development.)

## Abraham Maslow

**Abraham Maslow** (1908–1970) was born in Manhattan, New York, to a family of Russian-Jewish immigrants. He experienced an unhappy childhood growing up; Maslow was often subjected to gang violence and an abusive mother who used religious superstition to threaten and coax him into behaving appropriately. These conditions, including the fact that Maslow had a distant relationship with his father, greatly impacted his school performance. Although his grades were not as high as those of his peers, Maslow eventually earned acceptance into the City College of New York (CCNY). Initially intrigued with studies in the humanities, Maslow turned his attention toward the field of psychology during his second year at CCNY while reading the works of John B. Watson (Dewsbury, Benjamin, & Wertheimer, 2006). Maslow transferred to the University of Wisconsin to pursue graduate studies in primatology, and while there he worked under his mentor Harry Harlow. Maslow received his doctoral degree in 1934. Upon returning to New York in 1935, Maslow became involved with a conference sponsored by Edward L. Thorndike at the Teachers College at Columbia University where he was eventually offered a postdoctoral fellowship. In 1937, he earned a teaching position at Brooklyn College. With the events of World War II, in 1949, Maslow redefined his interests in dominance and sexuality and turned his focus toward social and abnormal psychology, especially human motivation (Dewsbury et al., 2006).

As a result of his studies in social psychology, Maslow questioned human motivation, which led him to develop his theory on the hierarchy of needs. Maslow hypothesized that humans experience needs on a continual basis, and for every need that is satisfied, another emerges (Dewsbury et al., 2006). Maslow prioritized these human needs within a pyramid graphic. At the base of the pyramid are physiological needs, such as hunger and thirst. Following these basic needs are safety, belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow's theory posits that individuals will tend to progress through this hierarchy of needs as each level of need is met. Ultimately, if an individual is successful at meeting all of the prior basic needs, he or she will arrive at the stage of self-actualization in which the primary concern is to achieve one's greatest potential.

Guided by his work in self-actualization, Maslow believed in the importance of meeting the biological needs that stem from childhood as a means of moving the individual toward fulfillment of self-actualization (Myers, 1998). Maslow believed that positive early experiences during the period

of childhood shaped one's emotional development. Although Maslow later rejected the notion that secure emotional development is necessary in order for an individual to achieve self-actualization, the idea that positive experiences early on in life have the potential to shape one's development over time is still an important consideration for educators today. Many early childhood educators still support Maslow's ideas concerning education and motivation. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion on Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.)

## Benjamin Bloom

**Benjamin Bloom** (1913–1999) was one of five children born to a family of Russian immigrants in Lansford, Pennsylvania (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003). After graduating from high school with the distinction of valedictorian in 1931, Bloom received a scholarship to attend Pennsylvania State University. Within 4 years, Bloom had succeeded at earning both his bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology. Later, as a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, where he earned his PhD in 1942, Bloom assumed a research assistant position for the office of the university's Board of Examinations. The primary responsibility of the Board of Examinations was to design, administer, and score the examinations upon which degrees were awarded. In 1940, Bloom advanced from his work in research to working directly as a board member, a position Bloom held until 1959.

Bloom was eventually appointed as an instructor of educational psychology and remained at the university for a period of more than 30 years. During this time, Bloom also secured the position of University Examiner. In 1939, the Board of Examination's emphasis on testing factual information using multiple-choice, true-false, and matching formats shifted to measuring students' abilities to reason and problem solve across all disciplines of study (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003). Bloom's role as University Examiner naturally led him to experiment with different instructional methods and various ways to measure subsequent knowledge. Bloom would later design different methods for measuring problem-solving capabilities and, from 1959 to 1960, Bloom worked at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California.

While working at Stanford, Bloom shifted his attention from measurement and instructional methods to examining curriculum and instruction within the framework of human development. In 1956, he published the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives—Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*, in which he sought to classify the various goals of education in terms of curriculum and evaluation (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003). From Bloom's *Taxonomy* came a set of principles that addressed education and instruction (see Figure 2.2). "These principles emphasized students' 'intended learning outcomes,' teachers' distinctions between the different learning objectives, the necessity for consistent and logical objectives while adhering to current theories in psychology, and 'descriptive' educational classifications" (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003, p. 374). Bloom's publication of *Taxonomy* helped broaden the field of education to encompass numerous educational goals and enabled teachers to develop and enhance curriculum and their methods for measuring educational outcomes.

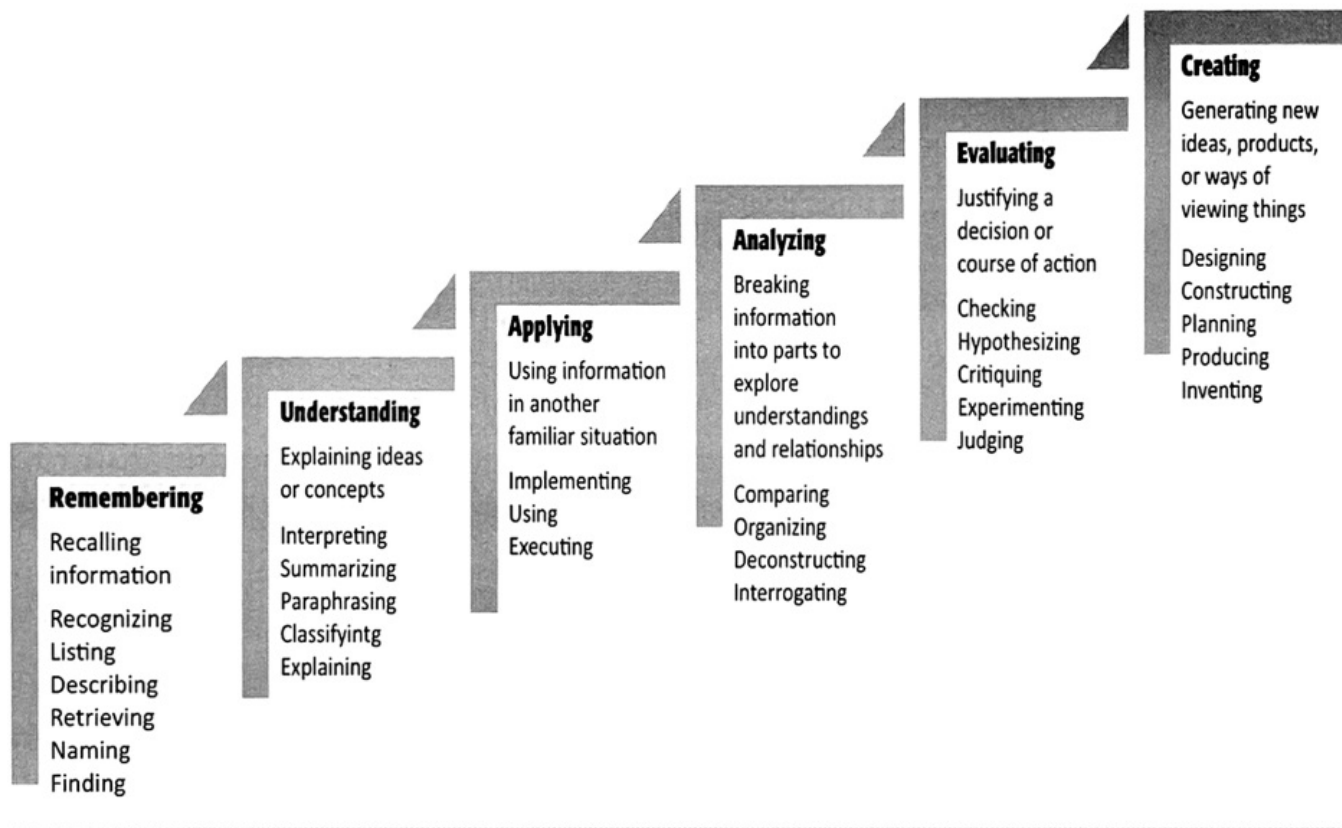
Bloom's publication of *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (1964) emphasized that while there is little evidence that changing one's environment impacts intelligence, marked changes in environment during the early years can have a greater impact on intelligence than the same degree of changes in later periods of development (Braun & Edwards, 1972). Bloom believed that in order to maximize each child's greatest learning potential, educators must begin as early as the preschool years to facilitate children's motivation to achieve and learn. Just before the publication of *Stability and Change*, Bloom utilized the research findings from his book to support the creation of Head Start.

Bloom's work emphasized the necessity for providing optimal learning environments for children at home and in early learning centers. His philosophy of education also focused on the



Figure 2.2

## Bloom's Revised Taxonomy



importance of promoting children's problem-solving capabilities and developing the essential foundations for learning that will enable children to move forward—past financial and cultural barriers. According to Bloom, the primary goal of education is to enable students to develop the necessary reasoning skills that can be used across all disciplines, placing far greater emphasis on how knowledge is taught than on the value of knowledge in its factual form.

## Jerome Bruner

**Jerome Bruner** (1915– ) was the youngest of four children born to an affluent Jewish, Eastern European family in New York. During his secondary school years, Bruner became interested in subjects like French, mathematics, and history, with surprisingly little interest in the sciences (Bruner, 1983). Bruner entered the field of psychology by chance, having taken courses in comparative psychology and neuropsychology. He earned an undergraduate degree and doctoral degree from Duke and Harvard, respectively. During his doctoral program, Bruner's academic emphasis centered on experimental psychology, examining the subjects of perception, memory, and learning and motivation, including animal behavior. Toward the end of World War II, Bruner accepted a teaching position at Harvard, where he remained for 27 years.

Jerome Bruner's work was an influential source of change for the field of cognitive development. Influenced by the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, Bruner believed that children were

active learners and that the act of organizing new information occurs in three phases: enactive, iconic, and symbolic representation. Infants use enactive representation to learn about their environment through active exploration and manipulation (Slee, 2002). Children pass through the stage of enactive representation to iconic representation at about 2 or 3 years of age as they begin to rely less on active manipulation of their environment and more on using mental pictures to create meaning. Around age 7, children enter the stage of symbolic representation, at which time they make use of symbols to represent knowledge. According to Bruner, it is during the stage of symbolic representation that children's language development aids them in the use of symbolic thought, and without it, children would be dependent on enactive and iconic representation to acquire meaning. Bruner believed that it is most effective for the introduction of new material to progress through these three stages.

Bruner is also well known for his advocacy of the spiral curriculum, in which knowledge is presented in the format of a continuous spiral. As children progress in their acquisition of new material, teachers should construct the curriculum in such a way that it provides numerous opportunities for children to revisit the material over time—each time exploring a different aspect of the material—as a means of helping children develop a deeper understanding (Bakhurst & Shanker, 2001). In short, the spiral curriculum allows children an opportunity to revisit basic ideas and concepts repeatedly (Bruner, 1960).

Bruner also emphasized the importance of introducing children to a variety of subject matter very early on in their development. According to him, this helps children to identify their own unique interests and better supports their motivation. Bruner (1960) himself once said, "We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (p. 33). Indeed, Bruner's work has assisted educators in the process of reconsidering the approach toward educating young children.

Bruner's ideas on supporting the development of children's individual interests and competencies have moved educators to support learning environments that foster collaborative exploration and problem-solving skills. "To those who know him, Bruner remains the [complete] educator in the flesh" (Gardner, 2001, p. 94).

## WHO WERE THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT?

The kindergarten movement constituted a more formalized approach to the socialization and education of young children. Contributors to the movement championed the spirit of Rousseau's and Froebel's educational philosophy, which was an important beginning point for a movement that would define early childhood education as we know it today.

### European Influences

To his everlasting credit, Friedrich Froebel bears the distinction as the sovereign leader of the kindergarten movement. Below you will see how Froebel's disciples helped launch one of the most quintessential movements in Western educational history. Initially, kindergarten would be viewed as the great hope to turn the tide of hopelessness and disillusionment—the only means of eradicating U.S. slums. During the early years, the movement was primarily a philanthropic and religious undertaking. However, over time, its purposes for society would be altered again and again in response to societal needs and concerns.

## Friedrich Froebel

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Friedrich Froebel was, single-handedly, one of the most prolific contributors to the kindergarten movement in the United States. Vestiges from Froebel's 19th-century kindergarten in Germany are still evident today in early childhood classrooms across America. As you will glean from the following paragraphs, Froebel joins the ranks of his U.S. counterparts in making an indelible imprint on the creation of effective kindergartens.

## American Influences

Early pioneers of the kindergarten movement captured the attention of esteemed and well-respected educators and philosophers. Although their efforts were often fraught with literal and conceptual misinterpretations of Froebelian philosophy, the movement gained great momentum in the United States. The contributions of these early pioneers to the field of early care and education at large cannot be underestimated.

## The Peabody Sisters

**Elizabeth Palmer Peabody** (1804–1894) and **Mary Tyler Peabody Mann** (1807–1887) were the eldest of seven children born to Nathaniel Peabody and Elizabeth Palmer. Elizabeth Palmer was raised in the Unitarian religion and ran a school that emphasized bringing out the unique excellence in every student, girls included. Primarily due to their mother's influence, these sisters read widely and had a broad range of interests. Elizabeth Peabody's ambition as a young adult was to escape Salem, her native town, in order to experience the cultural riches and theological controversies of Boston. In 1822, she made her move and established a private school for girls in Boston. However, the school failed to attract enough enrollees to survive for much more than a year. Mary Peabody later joined Elizabeth in Boston to embark on a teaching career. In 1825, the sisters opened another girls' school in Brookline, Boston. The school thrived until 1832, when Elizabeth Peabody learned of a partner's misappropriations of school finances.

Elizabeth Peabody's educational philosophy was based on **transcendentalism**, which was anchored in the idea of a just society informed by liberal Christianity. Transcendentalism stressed the need for historical knowledge in order to balance the movement's focus on individual intuition. Peabody soon learned of the German kindergarten movement, which would dovetail nicely with her ideas regarding the education of the very young. Greatly inspired by Friedrich Froebel's work in Germany, Elizabeth and her sister Mary opened the nation's first *formal* kindergarten in Boston in 1860. The sisters worked tirelessly in the school and on promoting their ideas. Eventually, Elizabeth Peabody published a journal on kindergartens, which became her main focus for most of her career. From 1879 to 1884, Elizabeth Peabody was a lecturer at Bronson Alcott's Temple School in Boston. Elizabeth Peabody lived longer than any of her sisters and met her life's goal to institutionalize transcendentalism in a very practical way—by establishing kindergartens in every state of the union.

## Margarethe Meyer Schurz

**Margarethe Meyer Schurz** (1833–1876) was born in Hamburg, Germany, to a prominent family that encouraged her to pursue the arts and education. As a teenager, Schurz was exposed to the teachings of her predecessor and kindergarten advocate Friedrich Froebel. In 1849, Schurz and her sister Bertha met Froebel. Bertha spent the next 2 years opening kindergartens in Germany, and in 1851, Bertha and her husband opened the England Infant Garden in Tavistock Place. Margarethe Schurz taught there before moving to Watertown, Wisconsin, with her husband.



When Schurz arrived in America, she carried Froebel's ideas with her. Schurz was committed to employing Froebel's philosophy while caring for her daughter, Agathe, and four neighbor children. She engaged them in games, songs, and group activities that channeled their energy while, at the same time, preparing them aptly for formal schooling. In 1859, Elizabeth Peabody visited the Schurzes' home and was impressed with Agathe's ability and maturity. Schurz informed her of the Froebelian philosophy, and Elizabeth became an immediate convert, establishing a kindergarten within a year. Other parents were also impressed with the children's progress and urged Schurz to assist them with their own children. Responding to the pressure, Schurz opened a kindergarten in her own home. Actually, Schurz's kindergarten was one of the very first in the United States. Like most of the early kindergartens in the United States, all activities were conducted in German. The kindergarten in Watertown continued until World War I, when it was closed due to the prohibition of the German language. Nevertheless, Schurz's work gained her preeminence and an audience; kindergarten became an accepted and integral part of American education and an accepted course of study for elementary teachers.

## Susan Elizabeth Blow

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, **Susan Elizabeth Blow** (1843–1916) was the oldest of six children born to Henry Taylor Blow and Minerva Grimsley Blow. Blow's father was a successful businessman who made his money in the lead industry, and Blow had a very comfortable lifestyle. Blow was tutored by her governesses and attended private school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Blow enjoyed sharing her lessons with her younger brothers and sisters. In 1859, when she was 16, Blow attended a private school in New York City, but her education there was cut short by the Civil War, so she returned to Missouri in 1861.

Blow then traveled to Germany, and there she experienced something that gave the rest of her life direction. She observed kindergarten classrooms inspired by the work of Froebel and decided that children in America should have a similar experience. Once back in the United States, Blow had a ferocious appetite for learning as much as she could about the kindergarten movement and Froebelian philosophy, and she spoke regularly to educators about creating a kindergarten program in America. Capitalizing on her family's social status and connections, Blow recruited her father to ask Dr. William Torrey Harris, superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools, to open an experimental kindergarten. Susan offered to direct it if Dr. Harris provided a room and a paid teacher. In September 1873, Susan Blow opened the first public kindergarten classroom in the United States at the Des Peres School in Carondelet (Braun & Edwards, 1972; Weber, 1984).

While most other classrooms were plain, Blow's kindergarten classroom was bright and cheerful. It had low tables and short benches suitable for small children. The room also contained many plants, books, and toys for children to use. The kindergarten curriculum entailed students learning about color, shapes, and fractions by using simple objects like balls and blocks. Students also learned about hygiene, eating well, and getting regular exercise. Blow taught children in the morning and teachers in the afternoon. And by 1883, every St. Louis public school had a kindergarten, becoming the model for the nation.

## Patty Smith Hill

**Patty Smith Hill** (1868–1946) was born in Kentucky in 1868. Her upbringing was remarkably unique for that period; her father believed in the right of women to receive an education, and her mother believed that children should experience a happy and adventurous childhood (Wolfe, 2002). As a result of the family relocating to Texas and Missouri and then returning to Kentucky, Hill witnessed and experienced firsthand the severe poverty that pervaded the country in the late 1880s.

She was convinced that she wanted to work with children who experienced financial hardship and severe work conditions (Wolfe, 2002). Hill graduated from the Louisville Collegiate Institute at age 18 and later attended the Louisville Training School for Kindergarten, where she completed her training in 1889 (Wolfe, 2002).

In 1905, Hill was hired by Columbia Teachers College (now Teachers College, Columbia University) as a faculty member and was later promoted to the position of professor in 1922 (Osborn, 1980). While there, Hill had assumed the role of director of the Kindergarten Department in 1910. However, as a result of her status in the department and her work with G. Stanley Hall, an American leader in emerging psychological and social thought, Hill began to question her roots in Froebelian philosophy, which later compelled her to modify the kindergarten curriculum. She also worked alongside John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, both of whom further contributed to her evolving perspective on early childhood education during the kindergarten movement (Osborn, 1980). Hill was an avid supporter of the progressive education movement in the late 1800s. Subsequently, she began to incorporate new ideas into her teaching approach that encouraged children to make their own choices and to actively experiment with materials within the context of a flexible daily schedule (Osborn, 1980). Hill promoted democracy in the classroom and mutual respect among the students (Cohen & Rudolph, 1977).

While Hill continued to believe in the utility of Froebel's gifts as a part of the kindergarten curriculum, she rejected the use of his occupations and further modified the curriculum by adding supplemental materials and activities like dolls and dollhouses, games, blocks, music, art, nature, and literature (Osborn, 1980). Hill's kindergarten materials and activities encouraged creativity among children, socialization, and parent involvement. Her transition away from Froebel's educational philosophy and its emphasis on fine motor activities (Cohen & Rudolph, 1977) also included the development of the Hill floor blocks, which promoted children's gross motor development (Wolfe, 2002). Patty Hill was the first educator to join kindergartens with first-grade classes, resulting in cooperative and multiage learning settings (Peltzman, 1998). In addition to reforming the kindergarten curriculum, she was also known for being an elder statesman of nursery school education. Hill established a nursery school on the campus of Columbia's Teachers College in 1921.

In the very beginning of early childhood education in the United States, only a few educators had experience in the field; most of them had varied backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, they were unfamiliar with their respective colleagues. Recognizing this, Hill convened a small group of these educators at Columbia Teachers College. This group became the precursor of what is now the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Braun & Edwards, 1972). To her everlasting credit, Patty Smith Hill professionalized the field of early childhood education. We remain grateful to her for the endorsement of early childhood teachers as valid professionals, a by-product of her very important work.

## Summary - - - - -

The preceding pages chronicle the rich and diverse history of early childhood education as a special branch of education. One common denominator at every turn in history was the interplay between the demands of society and educational philosophy and practice. Society dictated early childhood educational approaches, and as time progressed, these approaches became more refined and developmentally appropriate. As practitioners in the field, we have benefitted greatly from the trials and tribulations of those who have gone before us. Thanks to the perseverance and insight of our predecessors, our young children, their families, and our preschools are better today. It is now up to us to make our own individual contributions to early childhood education's rich heritage.