

WHO ARE THE TEACHERS OF THE YOUNG CHILD?

Margarita had always wanted to be an early childhood teacher. Right after high school she went to a community college and earned her AA degree. Shortly after her first child was born, she became a licensed family child care provider and cares for infants and toddlers in her own home. It is important to Margarita that she feels she is making a contribution to the family's well-being as well as enjoying a satisfying career. She plans to pursue her BA degree in the evenings when her children are older.

Paul recently spent several years teaching in a school for emotionally disturbed children. He has been a lead teacher for four-year-olds at the child care center for two years, gaining experience with children whose developmental patterns are typical. Paul wants to remain a teacher but is concerned about the salary levels. He has given himself one more year before he will make a decision.

Kendra's four children were in parent cooperative nursery schools, where she enjoyed the companionship of so many other parents of young children. After a few years of teaching elementary school, she is now director of a parent co-op and teaches children from ages two to five. She particularly enjoys leading weekly parent discussion groups.

Elva was the most sought after parent-aide in the school after she began helping out when her two boys were ages four and five. This success stimulated her to get an AA degree in early childhood education, then a Bachelor's degree in child development. She is now a kindergarten teacher in a bilingual program.

Although all of these people had different motivations, they all were drawn to the early childhood classroom. They may teach in different settings, have different educational backgrounds and skills, yet they do share common everyday experiences of the teacher of young children. They plan, observe, listen, help, learn, play, console, discipline, confer, comfort, and teach the children and adults who make up their particular world of early childhood.

Teacher Diversity

A longitudinal study (Whitebrook, Sakai, Gerber & Howes, 2001) based on observations in the same child care centers in three California communities from 1994 to 2000 gives a glimpse of the diversity of teachers and caregivers in early childhood settings. The study is unusual as it is based on observations and data collected from the same centers in 1994, 1996, and 2000. The following picture emerged:

- 97% of the teachers were women.
- 33% were members of minority groups.
- 33% spoke a language other than English fluently.
- 68% had associates degrees.
- 37% had bachelor's degrees or higher.
- 25% were under 30 years of age.
- 53% were between 30 and 40 years of age.

The study also noted that 44% of the classrooms had Spanish-speaking children, but only half were staffed by at least one Spanish-speaking teacher. Nearly 50% of the classrooms had Chinese-speaking children, yet only 7% had a staff member who spoke Cantonese or Mandarin. Not surprisingly, nearly 30% of the teaching staff in the sample reported that parents had difficulty communicating with the staff because of language barriers.¹

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor (2001), center-based care throughout the United States reflects a similar demographic picture in the gender, ethnic, age, and amount of education categories.

Comparison with Teaching in Other Educational Settings

The nature of teaching in the early years is unlike that of other age groups. At first glance, the differences in teaching preschool and older children may outweigh any similarities. There are some common elements, however, that link the two. Early childhood teachers teach what other teachers teach. The curriculum in the early years is rich in math, science, social studies, history, language, art, and geography, as it is in any other grade.



¹ We must continue to collect and use ethnic data on children and teachers in early childhood programs to ensure that we continually address equity and justice issues in the early childhood field.

Early childhood teachers and their elementary and high school counterparts share many of the frustrations of the teaching profession—long hours, low pay, and a people-intensive workplace. They also share the joy of teaching—the opportunity to influence children's lives and the satisfaction of meeting the daily challenges that teaching children provides. Figure 5-1 highlights the similarities and differences between early childhood teachers and others.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Definitions

Over the years the teacher's role in the early childhood classroom has been defined in many ways.

Two 30-year-old descriptions are still valid today when defining the innumerable variety of tasks teachers perform. Spodek (1972) noted that the teacher is part lecturer, storyteller, traffic director, conflict mediator, psychological diagnostician, custodian, and file clerk. Stanton (Beyer, 1968), a pioneer early childhood teacher, added plumber, carpenter, poet, and musician to the list, as well as degrees and training in psychology, medicine, and sociology. "Now, at 83, she's ready!" said Stanton.

This diversity is exactly what makes teaching in the early years so appealing. The multiple roles a teacher plays add challenge to the job. Nor are these descriptions exhaustive; the list could include adult educator, parent resource, faculty member, chief purchasing agent, nurse, program planner, staff supervisor, business manager, treasurer, personnel director, employee, and employer.

ELEMENTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS	ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS
How teaching and learning occur	Through teacher–child interactions and concrete use of materials	Through lectures and demonstrations that are often teacher dominated
Play opportunities	Guides children toward discovery	Teaches subject matter
Opportunity for child to make choices	Primary learning medium is play	Usually just at recess
Classroom environment	Many choices throughout the day both inside and out	Few options—all students do same activity most of the day
Daily schedule	Abundant floor space, many activity centers, variety of materials	Rows of desks and tables
Small group interactions	Large blocks of time for unlimited exploration of materials and for play	45-minute to 1-hour periods on subject matter
Large group interactions	Majority of teaching	Much less frequent
Outdoor activity	Few times a day	Majority of teaching
Parent relationships	Teachers involved as intensively as they are in the classroom	Others usually supervise play yard—little direct teacher interaction
Working with other adults	Frequent, if not daily, contact	May see them once a year as child grows older
Educational materials	Often works with aide, assistant teachers, and parents	Usually teaches alone or with part-time aide
Evaluating students	Toys, games, natural materials, blocks	Textbooks and worksheets
Age range of students	Observational and anecdotal assessments, portfolios	Grades, tests, and report cards
Art, music, and physical education	Emphasis on growth of whole child	Standardized academic assessment
Teacher training	May have 2–2½ year age span or greater	Usually same age
	Available throughout the day as an ongoing part of curriculum	Restricted to a special class, time, or teacher
	Strong child development foundation	Emphasis on subject matter

Figure 5-1 The nature of teaching in the early years is unlike that of other age groups.

(The role of the teacher in relationship to parents and programs further discussed in Chapter 8.)

Two prominent early childhood teacher educators reinforce the value of having teachers who have a theoretical and historical grounding. Jones (1994) tells us that teachers, like young children, are constructivists. The complexity and unpredictability of teaching, she says, call for on-the-spot decisions, and those decisions are based on developmental and learning theory and constructed from the teacher's own experience and practice. Spodek (1994) calls for teachers to know the history and traditions of the field along with theory but also stresses the need to know "the cultural, social and political contexts in which early childhood education functions."

Teaching is defined as those daily "acts of creation" (Phillips, 1994) that are constructed from the teacher's own repertoire of skills, knowledge, and training, added to what he or she observes about children and his or her interactions with their families. The teacher as a collaborator is a significant part of the teacher's role definition in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy (see Chapter 10). Collaboration reinforces the notion underlying many definitions that teachers are, first and foremost, lifelong teachers.

Perhaps the job would seem more manageable and less overwhelming to the new teacher if some of the responsibilities were categorized. What teachers do with children is not all there is to teaching. Some of the work occurs outside the classroom. It is helpful to look at the teacher's role in another way. What are the things a teacher does with children? What are the things a teacher does after the children go home? How does the teacher interact with other adults in the early childhood setting?

In the Classroom

Interacting with Children

It is no secret that most teachers find their greatest satisfaction and challenges in the first role—who and what they are with children. The teacher-child interactions, the spur-of-the-moment crises, the intense activity, the on-the-spot decisions, the loving and nurturing, go far in making one "feel" like a real teacher. Helping Rhonda get a good grip on the hammer, soothing Josh and Benno after they bump heads, and

talking with Alexa about her drawing are at the heart of teaching young children. These encounters are enjoyable and provide moments for interactive teaching opportunities.¹ These times help establish good relationships with the children. It is during these spontaneous, anything-can-happen-and-probably-will times that teachers display their craftsmanship. The real art of teaching comes on the floor of the classroom. All teaching skills are called on. Responses are automatic and sometimes unplanned. Teachers intuitively use their knowledge base, their experience, and their proven techniques. Almost unconsciously, they reach back in their minds for all those things they know about children. Throughout the school day they apply that combination of knowledge and know-how.

The creative genius of a teacher is in the ability to find ways to interact with each child according to that child's needs, to stretch an attention span, motivate a child to persist at a task, or provide opportunity to experiment with materials, actively and autonomously (Honig, 1979).

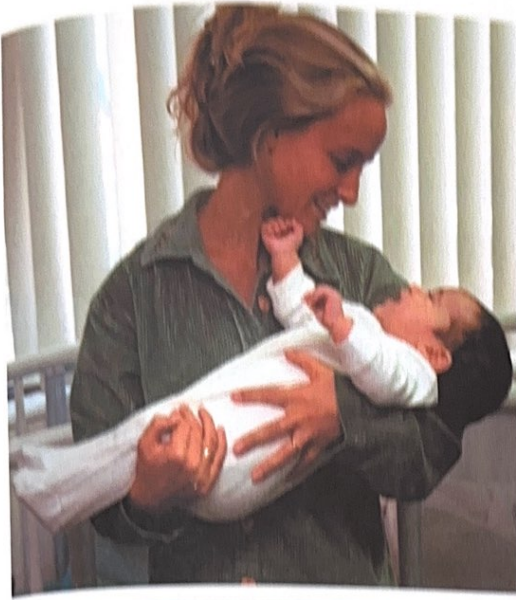
Managing the Classroom

A teacher spends a lot of time being a classroom manager. Being a successful manager is a little like being a successful juggler. Both require the ability to think about and react to more than three things at once. With a simple gesture, a significant look, or merely moving nearby, the teacher maintains the ongoing activity.

Anticipating a clash between Nathan and Julie, the teacher Miriam intervenes, redirects them, and moves away. At the same time, she has kept a watchful eye on Bobby at the bathroom sink. Passing close to Francie, she touches the child's shoulder in brief acknowledgment, smiling down as Francie struggles with the doll's dress. Miguel and Lea run up to her, grab her by the skirt and hand, and pull her toward the science display. They need to ask her something about the snake. . . . NOW! Jake, the handyman, has come into the classroom wanting to know exactly which of the climbers needs repair. Sarah, the parent volunteer, waves to her; it's time to check on the corn bread baking in the kitchen. Quickly,



¹ Teaching about the rich diversity that makes up our world can be an integral and spontaneous response when interacting with children.



Teachers model learning, listening, and loving.

the teacher files a mental note of the names of the children who accompany Sarah to the kitchen. As she reaches for a copy of *Ranger Rick* (the one with the great snake pictures in it), she observes Angie and her father entering the room. They both look upset. Telling Miguel and Lea she will return, the teacher walks over to greet the latecomers. As she moves past Doug, the student teacher, she comments on how well his language game is going and suggests he continue for another five minutes. Glancing at the clock, she realizes it is almost cleanup time. Her assistant, Chuck, watches her. She looks his way, and a nonverbal signal passes between them. Without a word, they both understand that snacks will be a little late today. Angie's father begins to explain their delay as the teacher bends down to invite the child to come and look at the new snake cage with her.

In this setting, the teacher has a major role in supervising a number of people. Aides and volunteers, student teachers, and visitors add to the richness of a program. But it is the teacher who coordinates and supervises their various functions. From the description, it is clear that the teacher's role as a supervisor and manager includes being:

- Caretaker for a safe environment.
- Observer of and listener to children.
- On-the-spot teacher trainer for students, aides, and volunteers.

- On-site supervisor for student teachers.
- A liaison and communicator with parents.

Setting the Tone

Teachers, obviously, are at the center of activity. Directly or indirectly they control much of the action. Because teachers are responsible for what occurs in the classroom, they must have a finger on its pulse at all times. As part of the juggling act, the teacher takes the pulse while moving around the class or yard. But something else happens. Throughout the day, from the moment of arrival, the teacher puts into effect another vital element. The teacher sets the tone, creating an atmosphere in which teachers and children will work and play. The skill with which it is done can make the critical difference between a classroom that is alive and supportive and one that is chaotic or apathetic. Because personality has such impact in the early childhood setting, the teacher creates more than an environmental mood, and does more than provide the setting and the learning activities.

The teacher establishes what will be the **emotional framework**. This is done with body movements, by the tone of voice, facial expressions or lack of them, and nonverbal as well as verbal gestures. The way the children respond reflects this tone.

This interaction between the atmosphere the teacher creates and the child's behavior sets the tone. Young children are very sensitive to adult moods and attitudes. The teacher who is upset or angry invites the children to react with their own tense brand of activity. A teacher who exudes calm and confidence, strength and support, will inspire a more relaxed, comfortable atmosphere in which children can learn and grow. If the teacher is punitive and harsh, the tone of the classroom will reflect that. On the other hand, if teachers act on their beliefs that children deserve respect and are intelligent, capable human beings, they will create an entirely different climate—and the children will respond in kind.

Normal behavior for the young child includes tantrums, crying, resistance, curiosity, impatience, emotional swings, noise, and self-centeredness. This is the time to achieve a sense of their own separate self. They need a place to work through the developmental stages that their needs and nature indicate. The atmosphere that a teacher creates is a key element in that process.

The way teachers handle conflict, react to tears, the words they use, and the voices raised communicate a direct message to the child. The

understanding, the soothing, the warmth, and the acceptance, create a climate where children feel safe, secure, and guided. This requires teachers who respect childhood, the individuality of children, their growing patterns, their emerging feelings, and their special capacity to learn. Today we would also stress the need for teachers to become culturally competent: to accept and understand cultural differences, have a working knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the children in the class, and appreciate that this may be the children's first experience outside their own culture.¹ The end result is that preschoolers will thrive in an atmosphere influenced by teachers who understand this time of tension and growth in their lives.



Planning and Evaluating the Curriculum

As teachers move through the school day interacting with children, managing the classroom, sensing the tone, they consciously or unconsciously evaluate what is happening:

- The relay race outdoors produced more tears than cheers; most of the children were interested in participating when the game started but drifted away. Why?
- The Cuisenaire rods were never touched today. How can we make this a more inviting activity?
- The toddlers are beginning to participate fully in the "Eensy Weensy Spider" fingerplay. What might they like to learn next?
- Several children have asked why Miguel "talks funny." When would be a good time to talk about his language and teach the class a few words in Spanish?²



The teacher notes where and how children played, the quality of their interactions, and possible "next steps" in curriculum. These notes are then discussed with other staff members at the end of the day or in weekly planning sessions.

Effective ways to develop curriculum planning are discussed in Chapter 10. It is important to note here, in discussing the role of the teacher, that the process has its roots in what the teacher sees happening in the classroom as children play and learn. It is constructivist theory in action:

teachers watching and observing children to give meaning and support to their learning. Early childhood teachers use their observation skills, collect data as they work with children, and build curriculum around their knowledge of actual classroom practice and behavior.

Outside the Classroom

Certain after-hours tasks are a part of any total teaching effort. This part of the job may not be as gratifying as working directly with children, yet teachers must understand why it is important.

A good classroom is often dependent on how teachers spend their time away from the children. Many of the tasks that give added strength and depth to a teacher's curriculum are those that, out of necessity, must be accomplished after hours. The two most obvious jobs that fall into this category are record keeping and meetings.

Record Keeping

Early childhood teachers and caregivers keep a variety of records; the type and kind will vary from school to school. Although report writing and record keeping may be considered time-consuming, they are essential to any good early childhood program. Record keeping is based on a number of factors:

- *The purpose for which the records will be used.* In schools that rely on government funding, record keeping is not optional. The children's progress, the teacher's performance, and the program itself must be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure continued funding.
- *The philosophy of the school.* In laboratory schools and teacher training centers, teachers write periodical progress reports on the children to guide them in planning.
- *As part of a teacher-training process.* Documentation is critical for accreditation of early childhood programs. For years, CDA (Child Development Associates) candidates submitted a written portfolio of their experiences in the classroom as supportive evidence of their competency as teachers of young children.
- *As part of an accreditation process.* NAEYC's accreditation procedures require extensive



¹ Emotional support is evident when children see that their family culture is valued.

² A goal of every early childhood program should be to foster positive attitudes and awareness of cultural differences.



The teacher determines the quality of the child's school experience by providing a supportive atmosphere in which children can learn.

documentation of the school's operation, ranging from governance and management issues to teacher effectiveness, space usage, parent involvement, school philosophy, and curriculum.

- *As a commitment to quality and appropriate child development practices.* Recording children's social and emotional growth provides information from which insights and interpretation can develop. It may be just a brief note taken on the run, a thoughtful anecdote written at length after class, or a checklist of the child's playmates for one day. All of these give teachers a greater understanding of the role they play in children's development.
- *As a means of parent information and education.* Recorded observations, notes, and similar data collected over a six-month period may show that Abraham is not participating

in any strenuous physical activity and studiously avoids activities that involve balancing and climbing. This information, when shared with parents, could lead to a medical evaluation and diagnosis of possible perceptual problems.¹

- *As a means of developing curriculum.* Curriculum plans and learning activities sprout from such reports and records. It wasn't until such data were collected for entry into first grade that the kindergarten teacher realized most of the children in the class were not sufficiently proficient with scissors. Curriculum was planned around this need, and the class learned a necessary skill.

Meetings

Meetings are probably the most time-consuming of all out-of-class jobs. The teacher may need to



¹ Early childhood teachers are in a unique position to support early identification, prevention, and treatment of developmental problems.

communicate with the other people who are involved in the lives of the children, directly or indirectly. Parents, other teachers, baby-sitters, doctors, and social workers are some of the people with whom a teacher may want to confer. Teachers attend many different kinds of meetings. Figure 5-2 lists the most common.

Other Responsibilities

Some of a teacher's after-hours activities are intended to fortify and vitalize the classroom. Therefore, teachers:

- *Organize and collect materials* for use in class. They might collect space shuttle books from the library, find out if the bagel factory will allow field trips, or cut 18 pumpkin shapes while watching television. Teachers are also responsible for maintaining an orderly classroom. They might add pictures to the bulletin board, obtain new books and records, or replenish curriculum materials.



In addition to working with children, teachers support parents when they keep in touch. A brief, friendly phone call can make a family feel included in their child's education process.

- *Purchase materials and equipment* that cannot be ordered. They know that the kitchen needs new mixing bowls, the supply room is low on red construction paper, and someone has to pick up fabric for pillow covers.
- *Make phone calls.* This is a quick and efficient way of keeping in touch. Teachers may call parents to check on children who are sick or absent. For children with special needs, teachers may need to contact doctors, therapists, and other specialists.
- *Work with parents* on multicultural issues, organizing class fairs or school fund-raising events, or hold quick telephone conferences to update parents about a child's progress.¹ Further examples can be found in Chapter 8.
- *Attend professional conferences and workshops* and visit and observe other school settings. This type of ongoing professional education helps teachers keep abreast of the field.
- *Attend in-service training events* or study for an advanced degree in an area related to early childhood education.

These duties are a part of the job of teaching young children but many will be shared with other teachers on the team or at the school. Though time-consuming, these responsibilities add to the creativity and care that teachers express for their classes.

THE TEACHER AS A PERSON

Personal Qualities

A teacher's personality has influence and impact. When a teacher exhibits a sense of trust, security, and support, the children echo those feelings and behaviors. Children learn to trust by being trusted; they learn respect by being respected. Children learn to understand others by being understood themselves. They learn responsibility by being treated as responsible human beings. The personal qualities of their teachers should include traits that foster those learnings.

Good teachers should have dedication, compassion, insight, flexibility, patience, energy, and self-confidence. Teachers should also be happy people who can laugh and use their sense of



¹ Teachers are in a unique position to strengthen the bond between a child's school experience and family culture.

Staff Meetings

Held usually once a week for individual teaching teams. Purpose is to plan curriculum, set goals, and discuss children's progress. Faculty meetings for all school personnel may be held less frequently.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

May be offered on a scheduled basis or they may be called by either parents or teachers as needed. Each school defines its own policy as to the number and frequency of parent contacts.

Parent Education Meetings

Many schools offer evening programs for parents. Teacher attendance may or may not be required.

Professional Meetings

Attendance at workshops, seminars, in-service training. Local, state, and national conferences are sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Association for Childhood Education International, and Child Care Coordinating Council.

Student-Teacher Conferences

In schools used as training sites, teachers arrange time with individual students assigned to their classes.

Home Visits¹

May or may not be optional. Some schools schedule them before opening day. Otherwise teachers must arrange them on their own time.



Figure 5-2 Teachers attend many different types of meetings, which help them create better programs, learn more about children, and learn how to become better teachers.

humor wisely. Liking children is part of wanting to work with them; teachers then feel that the job they are doing is important. Teachers need to be fair-minded, showing concern for all, regardless of color or creed. Physical and mental well-being are important, as is a demonstrated sense of responsibility and reliability. Teachers who can be both warm and loving, yet firm when expressing disapproval, have good teaching qualities.

The well-rounded teacher, while maintaining a professional commitment, has other interests as well. Good teachers have an involvement with the world outside the walls of the child care center. They want to help children understand some of the real-life issues and concerns. They know that their interest in the world at large transmits itself to children.

Quality teachers personalize teaching, integrating their individuality into their work in appropriate ways. By exposing the human qualities they possess, teachers strengthen the bond between themselves and the children.

This basic description is a framework, a checklist of personal attributes, a place to begin to look at the human side of teaching. Men and women who are able to nurture and comfort children treat them as real persons and value them as children. Expressing this takes practice so that teachers do not intrude on children's

well-being. Teachers do not have to sentimentalize childhood or tolerate misbehavior because it is "cute." Children deserve teachers who understand their nature and respect the limits of behavior.

The best teachers are the ones who are struggling to become more than they are, on any given day, and who demonstrate to their students that this quest to learn and to grow, to accept failure and go on to new challenges, is what life is all about (LeShan, 1992).

Self-Awareness

To be the best teacher possible, understanding and accepting oneself is vital. **Self-awareness** will make a difference in the way teachers relate to children. Each teacher must ask, "Who and what and why am I? And how does knowing this bring some meaning into my life? How does it affect my life as a teacher?"

Teachers may also begin to realize something about themselves. They know how and why children learn as they do, but they may not know about themselves as learners. Teachers communicate an authentic appreciation of learning when they have a sense of it in their own lives. Teachers might well ask themselves: "Do I see



¹ Many parents welcome a teacher's visit. Others may fear criticism or judgment about their home environment or family practices.

myself as a learner? Where does my learning take place? How? What happens to me when something is difficult or when I make a mistake? Do I learn from other teachers? Do I learn from children?" Teachers' recognition of themselves as learning, growing persons gives an added degree of sincerity to teaching.

Asking—and then answering—these questions helps teachers gain insights into their own behavior as adults and as professionals who work with children. In perceiving themselves as learners, for instance, they might see a similarity between their own learning style and that of some of the children in the class. Pausing to look at their own behavior when faced with a difficult task or in handling a mistake helps teachers remember what children experience each day. Opening themselves up to the possibility of learning from students stretches teachers' capacity to grow into relationships with children based on mutual respect and trust. This is especially important when teachers do not share the same cultural background or have no experience with a particular disability.¹ Opening themselves to learning from other teachers creates a foundation for mutual support, collegiality, professional mind-stretching, and deepening of friendships. The first step is self-awareness; the second step is self-acceptance. Adults who work with young children weave these insights into what they are learning about children. They also adopt these insights into their relationships with parents and other staff members. When teachers take the time to look at their own style of behavior and how it affects others, they place themselves on a par with children as learning, growing people.

Self-knowledge—examining values and personal qualities—takes courage and a willingness to risk oneself. Children, other teachers, and parents will respond. Accepting oneself is where to begin in accepting children.

Attitudes and Biases

Knowingly as well as unintentionally, a teacher's values and attitudes weave their way into relationships with children, parents, and other staff members. This can be both positive and negative. One way it can be harmful is in the area of prejudice. Personal beliefs concerning race, culture, gender, handicaps, and economic status may

negatively affect our teaching in ways of which we are not aware.² Facing prejudices about children and parents based on long-held beliefs may be one of the most difficult things for a teacher to do. Personal histories are filled with biases. Most teachers will not have lived through the significant and powerful experience of adapting to a new culture, or learning a new language, or surviving on food stamps and aid to dependent children, or living in a wheelchair; therefore, they may be uncomfortable with people who are labeled "different" because they have faced these issues.

Teachers have opinions, born of their own experiences, of what is "good" or "naughty" behavior (at least what their family thinks of as such). They also feel strongly about how parents should treat their children. Children who are messy, who have odors, whose clothes are too big or too small,



A positive self-concept and a willingness to be open to new experiences are hallmarks of a good teacher of young children.



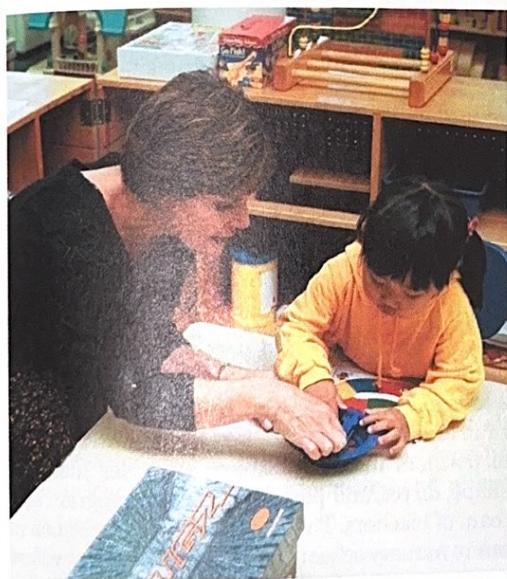
¹ A teacher's lifelong learning includes self-awareness and the ability to learn from others.

² Patricia Ramsey in her book *Teaching and Learning in a Diverse World* (1987) provides a format for the start of a thorough self-investigation of individual attitudes and biases.

who eat strange food, who don't do what girls or boys are supposed to do, may bother some teachers. Some of these biases can be resolved, but only if a teacher takes the time to examine personal beliefs and biases.

Anti-Bias Movement

There is a great deal of emphasis today on what is termed the "**anti-bias** approach" to teaching young children (Derman-Sparks, 1989). (See sections in Chapters 9, 11, and 15 for further discussion). This concern stems from several issues: (1) significant changes in the ethnic makeup in the United States, especially in the last decade; (2) widespread racial and ethnic prejudice still prevalent in this country; and (3) concern on the part of early childhood educators of the harm being done to children's self-identity and self-esteem. This important movement promotes the concept that all children are born equal and are worthy of our respect; it challenges teachers to examine beliefs, attitudes, and actions that might deny any child that unconditional respect. Some teachers may be forced into further soul searching and reflection before they can untangle their anxiety and attitudes about their prejudices. Our feelings show in our contacts with children,



Teachers' values and attitudes are reflected in the way they work with children.

and we do not want those feelings to damage their self-acceptance and self-appreciation or to pass on biases to other children. The question is not one of liking or disliking any child; rather it is one of teacher understanding and acceptance. By achieving that level of acceptance, teachers are better able to accept all of the children with whom they work regardless of their "likeability."

The anti-bias approach affords teachers a tremendous opportunity to confront their own anxieties and biases; work with parents of various religious and ethnic minority groups to learn some of their cultural norms and practices; work with parents of children with disabilities to learn more about how to improve each child's school experience; enrich the curriculum; represent accurately the broad ethnic makeup of this nation; influence the development of attitudes and values of young children toward the reality of the human condition; prevent irreparable harm to children's concept of themselves; and promote greater global understanding.

As a way to begin, teachers might ask themselves a few questions:

- Am I aware of my own identity and its influences on my beliefs and behaviors?
- Do I truly foster a respect for the value of those who are somehow different from me? How?
- Do I examine my biases and look at ways I can change my own attitudes? When? How?
- Do I show a preference for children who most closely fit my own ethnic, cultural, and religious background? When? How?
- Do I somehow pass along my biases to the children I teach? When? How? With whom?
- Do I truly enjoy differences in human beings? When? With whom?

Kuster (1994) suggests five critical issues for teachers who work with children and families who speak languages other than English:

1. Fluency in the child's language is critical to effective communication and to maximizing the child's learning experience.
2. Focus on the family's competency and learn to value the family's child-rearing practices.
3. Teachers' ability to preserve and enhance another families' culture by learning and valuing their own first.



1 All early childhood programs should be examined for discrimination, bias, and ethnocentrism so that children can develop a positive self-identity.



4. Promote the use of multi-age groupings of children to foster social responsibility.¹
5. Confront one's own personal attitudes and biases.²

Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout is an occupational hazard of substantial proportion and often results when a teacher is faced with a demanding workload, uncertain or inadequate rewards, and other pressures that damage work effectiveness. At its most extreme, teacher burnout can drive a good professional out of the field altogether, a common situation in early childhood settings and one that creates *one of the highest occupational turnover rates in the nation*.

Burnout, according to Dresden and Myers (1989), "does not result from what we do or when we do it so much as it comes from a *sense of not being able to make a visible impact . . . on children, . . . parents, . . . (other) teachers . . . in the working setting . . . or in society*." This results in low morale, stress, and disillusionment in a profession where staff quality is the most important single factor in program quality. A school climate where open communication, trust, satisfying interpersonal relations, and clarity of roles and responsibilities exist helps create a positive atmosphere where burnout is less likely to occur (Jorde-Bloom, 1988a). In such a climate, where teachers can meet children's needs and program goals can be more effectively addressed, feelings of job satisfaction and productivity will prevail.

Recent research suggests a number of characteristics that produce healthy, happy, and positive school climates:

- Friendly, supportive, and trusting staff relationships.
- Emphasis on personal and professional growth.
- Leadership with clear expectations that encourages and supports staff.
- Clearly defined roles and policies.
- Fairness and equity regarding promotions, raises, and other rewards.
- Staff involved in decision-making.
- Agreement among staff on goals and objectives.
- Emphasis on efficiency and good planning.

- An equipped and cared-for physical environment.
- The ability to adapt to change (Jorde-Bloom, 1988b).

It is the responsibility of all teachers on the staff to work together to create the kind of climate that enhances success and satisfaction in the workplace. Related discussions are in Chapters 10 and 15.

BECOMING A TEACHER

A Collaborative Effort

The heart of teaching is, of course, what happens when you begin to work in a classroom every day. The teaching role is not restricted to working with children, though. Numerous adults must be met, tolerated, worked with, and included in the total teaching picture. Some of these people may be:

- Other professional teachers, aides, and student teachers.
- Volunteers.
- Program directors and administrators.
- School support personnel; clerical and janitorial staffs, food service workers, bus drivers.
- Parents.
- Consultants and specialists.

The majority of these interactions will be with other teachers, and these relationships are among the most important a teacher can have.

The beginning teacher may join a team of teachers or may teach in a small class alone. This will depend on many factors, including the age level of the children, licensing or accrediting requirements, the size of the classroom, and the school's philosophy and practices. In infant programs, for instance, there is a higher ratio of adults per child (NAEYC suggests as optimal a ratio of 1:4), so it is more likely there will be several teachers in one classroom. Together they will shape, direct, and participate in that program as a team of teachers. The team approach is common in many nursery schools and child care centers where larger groups of children attend. Kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers generally teach alone in self-contained classrooms, sometimes



¹ This activity may be a developmentally appropriate practice that complements many diverse cultural traditions.

² Teachers may need to learn new skills to effectively enhance a child's sense of self.

with an aide. In extended-day, after-school programs, high school and college students may make up the rest of the team.

Most teams of teachers are composed of people with varying skills, experience, and training. A typical group will have a lead or head teacher—someone who is trained in child development or early childhood education. Assistants with less experience and training add support. Student teachers, interns, and volunteers may round out the group. A resource teacher—someone who specializes in art, music, or physical development, for instance—may also be available on a part-time basis.

Many state regulations mandate a minimum number of adults in the early childhood setting, and this minimum varies with the ages of the children. The prescribed ratio of adult to children changes as the children mature and become able to function in more independent ways.

There are many reasons why teaching in teams is such an integral part of so many early childhood programs. The advantages are numerous:

- *Variety of adult role models.* Teachers who are male, female, disabled, young, middle-aged, older, and varying in ethnic backgrounds bring equally diverse attitudes, approaches to children, interests, skills, and knowledge to share. This teaches children to accept differences in people as they watch adults interact with others on the teaching team.¹
- *Support for children.* The absence of one teacher is not as disruptive when the children can count on other familiar faces. This enables children to learn to trust the teaching environment because someone they know is always there.
- *Collegiality.* Teachers can find friendship and support from one another as they share planning, problems, and achievements and grow in admiration and respect for one another.
- *Lightened workload.* There is a sharing of all the teaching tasks, from curriculum planning and cleanup to parent conferencing and record keeping.
- *Enriched program.* Talents and resources of the team are used to best advantage so that team members will teach to their strengths, adding richness to the program.

Most of the disadvantages of team teaching stem from communication problems among team members. The guidelines to successful teaching, at the beginning of the next section, are particularly useful for team situations. Teachers new to the team teaching process will want to discuss them with other team members.

Good teachers are “complicated human beings with strengths and weaknesses, talents and limitations, good days and bad days” (LeShan, 1992). They work at becoming good teachers by developing skills in interpersonal relationships with other adults, just as they promote good social relationships between the young children they teach.

Communication problems and conflicts arise in every teaching situation. The following guidelines will help teachers promote good working relationships. These guidelines focus on working with others in the school setting; parent-teacher relationships are discussed in Chapter 8.

Ten Essentials of Successful Teaching

Ten essential attributes of successful teaching are:

1. Professionalism
2. A satisfying role
3. Flexibility
4. Open and frequent communication
5. Self-awareness
6. Mutual respect and acceptance
7. Team spirit and empathy
8. A willingness to share the spotlight
9. Clearly defined roles
10. Evaluation

Each of these attributes is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Professionalism

Professional attitudes and behavior contribute to successful teaching. Teachers should relate to one another as peers, colleagues, and professionals,



¹ The early childhood educator needs to remember to appreciate a diverse world in the professional community as well as in the community of children and their families.



and keep personal grievances out of the classroom. There is no place in the early childhood setting for petty gossip, ill will, or exclusive cliques.¹ Through written personnel policies, most schools have established appropriate procedures through which teachers may address certain issues. The professional approach, however, is to first attempt to work out personal differences with the other person on a one-to-one basis.

Teachers should ask themselves: Do I behave in a professional manner? Can I keep confidences without being told to do so? Do I try to meet with those with whom I have differences in an attempt to work them out? Do I complain publicly about another member of the staff?

A Satisfying Role

To teach successfully, each person must have a satisfying role to play. That means each person must be appreciated for the special something he or she brings to the classroom and the school. Beginning teachers might want to ask

themselves: Is there a place in my school (or on my team) that is uniquely mine? How do my special talents and experiences contribute to the success of this program? These questions would make for a good staff meeting discussion so that all teachers could reflect on their special capabilities and share them with one another.

Flexibility

Just as it is important to change with and adapt to the varying needs of children, so is it crucial to respond to the needs of other staff members with a give-and-take approach. Flexibility involves a willingness to offer and accept negotiation and compromise to preserve the effectiveness of the whole staff's effort. Teachers should ask themselves: Do I demonstrate a willingness to change with the changing needs of my coworkers, or do I adhere rigidly to preset plans or attitudes? Am I open to new ideas proposed by others? Do I help children become comfortable with flexibility and change?



Members of a teaching team need frequent communication with one another.



¹ The teacher has an important role as a behavior model with other teachers as well as with children.

Open and Frequent Communication

The ability and opportunity to communicate thoughts, concerns, and feelings to others honestly and openly are perhaps the most important factors in promoting good interpersonal relationships. Communication takes many forms: verbal and nonverbal, written and spoken, and even body language.

Teachers must seek out opportunities for formal and informal communication with others on the staff. This may mean taking advantage of the faculty lounge during lunch hour or arriving five minutes early to catch someone before children arrive. For those who work on teaching teams, set-up and cleanup times can be used to discuss issues, modify strategies, and resolve misunderstandings.

The three basic reasons for developing successful communication links with others on the teaching staff are:

1. *To share information*—about children and their families ("Sheila's grandmother died yesterday"), about changes in the schedule ("The dentist is unable to visit today; who

wants to conduct group time?"), and about child development strategies ("Remember, we are all going to observe Leah's gross motor skills this week").

2. *To contribute new ideas*—teachers encourage one another to keep teaching fresh and alive when they share a recent article of interest, reports from a conference they attended, or a successful art activity.
3. *To solve problems*—accepting differences in opinions, approaches, personality, and style among people is part of the challenge of working closely with others. Open communication is an ongoing process in which people have honest and frequent discussion of their differences, respecting each other's feelings and integrity and working together for mutually agreeable solutions.

Self-Awareness

Earlier in this chapter self-awareness as a qualification for a good early childhood teacher was discussed. The focus was primarily on the teacher's self-awareness in relationships with children. In this discussion, the focus is on the



Sharing insights with colleagues helps the early childhood professional become more self-aware.

teacher's adult relationships. Beginning teachers may feel uncomfortable or inadequate in their relationships with others on the staff; once they know more about themselves and accept who they are, teachers can apply this self-awareness to their relationships with fellow workers.

To promote self-knowledge that contributes to success as a member of a faculty or teaching team, teachers might ask themselves: What are my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, and how do they complement or conflict with others in this school? Do I prefer to follow or lead, to plan programs or carry out the plans developed by others? In what teaching situations do I feel uncomfortable, and why? What have I done lately that caused me to learn more about myself?

Mutual Respect and Acceptance

Appreciating and accepting the individuality of other team members are as important to the success of the program as are appreciating and accepting the individuality of each child. The climate of trust and the nonthreatening atmosphere gained through mutual respect allow each staff member to contribute openly and innovatively to the program. To develop that appreciation for one another, teachers should ask themselves: What do I have in common with my coworkers? Are their teaching philosophies different from mine and, if so, in what way? What are their social and cultural values?¹ What are their previous experiences with young children? What do I want them to respect and accept about me?



Team Spirit and Empathy

A sense of being a team does not happen by accident, but by conscious effort. Every member of the staff must be committed to working together on a daily basis as well as to the long-term goals of the specific program and to being empathic to the feelings and needs of coworkers.

To develop staff relationships that enhance a team spirit, teachers should ask themselves: How can I show support to my coworkers? What can I do to promote and sustain high morale among my fellow teachers? Where and how can I offer help to another staff member?



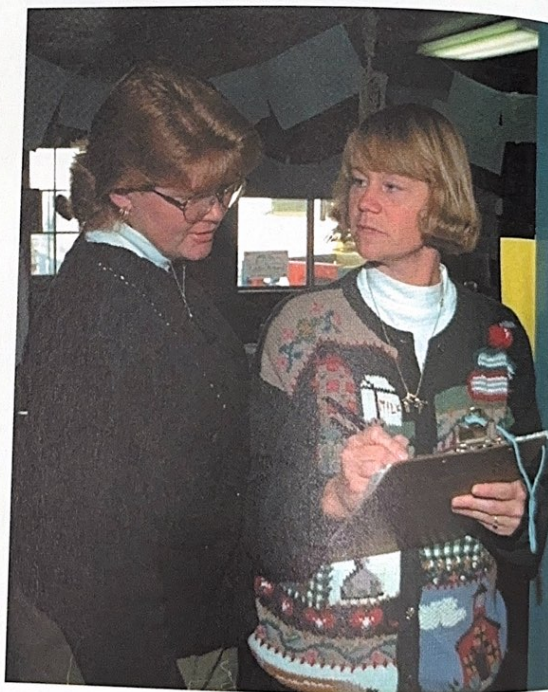
¹ When we learn about the cultural norms and habits of our colleagues, we model a respect and concern for all.

A Willingness to Share the Spotlight

Tension among staff members can arise from a sense of competition. Teachers must be willing to admit that others are just as dedicated to children and deserving of their affections as they are. There must be a feeling of shared success when things work well, just as there is a shared responsibility when problems arise. Teachers should ask themselves: How do I feel when another teacher is praised by a parent in front of me? How do I feel when a child prefers another teacher to me? Am I able to acknowledge my coworkers' achievements?

Clearly Defined Roles

A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities a teacher has is essential for the teacher's own sense of well-being and for the smooth functioning of the program. A written job description helps teachers understand the scope of their own position as well as those of staff members.



Professional attitudes and behavior are crucial. Teachers and administrators work together in solving problems as colleagues and coworkers.

Clearly defined teacher roles also serve as a guard against legal and ethical problems, especially if children are injured at school. Teachers should ask themselves: Is my job description clearly written so I know the extent of my responsibilities? Do I fulfill my obligations, or are there areas where I am lax that might prove harmful to a child?

Evaluation

Evaluations are part of the privilege of claiming membership in the teaching profession. No teacher can become truly successful unless provisions are made for ongoing evaluations that provide a clear picture that confirms strengths and pinpoints areas for growth. Teachers should ask themselves: Do I accept evaluations as an essential part of teaching? Am I responsive to the suggestions made in my evaluations? When I evaluate others, am I fair, and do I share my observations in a supportive way?

Evaluations are discussed later in this chapter.

THE TEACHER AS A PROFESSIONAL

Attitudes and Background

There is a body of knowledge, an educational foundation, that is assumed of anyone entering the early childhood profession. Some basic teaching skills also are necessary. These include methods and techniques appropriate for teaching the very young child. Yet there is more if one is to be called a true professional.

Being a member of the teaching profession goes beyond an accumulation of methods, coursework, and teaching experiences. Being a professional teacher suggests an attitude about teaching. It is not simply an eight-hour-a-day job or an occupation chosen lightly. Teachers are called to the profession when they believe they can indeed make a difference in the lives of the children. Although that may at first sound *altruistic*, it reflects a dedication to teaching that exceeds the desire for a job or a steady paycheck.

There are professional expectations, starting with having a common background with others in the field. This includes studying child development and human behavior, family relations, parent education and development, and curriculum planning. Some practical teaching experience under the guidance of a master teacher is

assumed, as is a familiarity with observation and recording techniques. This foundation of knowledge and experience provides the framework for professional development. Teachers gradually acquire further skills on the job. They learn to juggle three or four interactions with children at once and develop the skill of stopping an argument by a mere look or a quick gesture. Thus, the process of becoming a professional teacher is an orderly progression along a continuum of development. Your state may have regulations or none at all; some states offer a specialized certification for early childhood professionals (Bredenkamp, 1992). Professional expectations mandated by the states provide some degree of professionalization of early childhood teachers.

This progression of teaching skills has been described by Lilian Katz (1999) as consisting of four distinct stages of teacher development, ranging from Survival to Maturity. The beginning teacher often feels inadequate and ill-prepared during the first year of teaching (Survival) but soon begins to focus on individual children and specific behavior problems (Consolidation). By the third or fourth year (Renewal) the teacher is ready to explore new ideas and resources and, within another year or two, has come to terms with teaching and searches for insights and perspectives (Maturity). At each stage, teachers need differing degrees of on-site support (mentoring), with increased exposure to professional conferences and organizations.

Professional Development

Developing a Professional Code of Ethics

As teachers mature, they turn their attention to issues and concerns outside themselves. Many of these issues, whether they are called so or not, are related to ethical conflicts and moral principles. Teachers are, after all, human beings, and that entails genuine conflict about behavior. Doing what is right becomes difficult at times; knowing what is right may be elusive. Even identifying what is right—an ethical conflict—may not be obvious.

Every day, situations arise with parents, other teachers, and administrators that require teachers to make some hard choices. Some cases are clearly ethical dilemmas: suspected child abuse by a parent or teacher, talking about children and their families outside of school, or the firing of a staff member without due cause. Others, some of which are common occurrences, may not seem as obvious.

Some everyday examples are:

When Parents:

- Ask you to advance their child into the next class against your advice.
- Want you to use discipline practices common to their family and culture but at odds with your own sense of what children need.¹
- Attempt to gossip with you about another staff member.

When Another Teacher:

- Suggests a private staff meeting outside of school with a select group of teachers.
- Refuses to take a turn cleaning out the animal cages.
- Regularly is absent from staff meetings.
- Disagrees with the school's educational philosophy and continues to teach in ways that differ from the approved methods in that setting.
- Goes to the school administrator with an inappropriate complaint about a staff team member.

When the Administrator:

- Insists on adding one more child to an already overenrolled class.
- Makes personnel decisions based on friendship, not performance.
- Backs a parent who complains about a teacher without hearing the teacher's side of the story.

Teachers may find it helpful to discuss their ethical concerns with colleagues. Some staffs provide in-service programs for the staff where these issues are raised. Other schools have a code of ethics for their employees to follow.

Ethical problems occur daily in any teacher's life. They are not problems of an abstract or impersonal nature. Just what are ethics? Essentially, they are the moral guidelines by which we govern our own behavior and that of society. "Ethics—in the form of knowledge and skill in making responsible professional decisions—is one of the most fundamental qualities of a competent early childhood educator" (Smith, in Feeney & Freeman, 1999).

We can strictly define ethics as "the system or code of morals of a particular philosopher, religion, group, or profession." This definition

suggests that a personal code of ethics can be supported by a professional code of ethics. A code of ethics is a set of statements that helps us deal with the temptations inherent in our occupations. It helps us act in terms of what is right rather than what is expedient (Katz & Ward, 1991).

Why might the early childhood profession need such a code? A primary reason is that the choices teachers make should be based not simply on personal values and preferences but "on values, judgments, and ethical commitments shared by the professional society or association of which they are a member" (Katz & Ward, 1991).²

A code of ethics provides collective wisdom and advice from a broad base in the profession. It states the principles by which each individual can measure and govern professional behavior. It says that a group or association has recognized the moral dimensions of its work. It provides teachers with a known, defined core of professional values—those basic commitments that any early childhood educator should consider inviolate. This protects teachers and administrators from having to make hard ethical decisions on the spur of the moment, possibly on the basis of personal bias. An established professional code supports the teacher's choice by saying, "It isn't that I won't act this way: *No early childhood educator should act this way*" (Kipnis, 1987).

NAEYC adopted a Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment in 1989. It has since been revised, most recently in 1997. The four sections of the Code are: (1) Ethical responsibilities to children; (2) Ethical responsibilities to families; (3) Ethical responsibilities to colleagues; and (4) Ethical responsibilities to community and society. The Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment may be found in Appendix B at the back of this text.

A basic list of core values has emerged from this work, values "that are deeply rooted in the history of our field" (NAEYC, 1997). Core values form the basis of agreement in the profession about standards of ethical behavior. They are:

- Appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle.
- Basing our work with children on knowledge of child development.
- Appreciating and supporting the close ties between the child and family.



¹ Teachers will need to become aware of child-rearing practices from many cultures.

² One of the values in NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct is the recognition that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society.

- Recognizing that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society.
- Respecting the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague).
- Helping children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard.

what do you think?

What do you think the Code of Ethics has to say about cultural diversity in early childhood programs? Which ideals and principles in the Code would you use as references in making a decision related to cultural sensitivity and understanding? Look at the situations described on page 204. How do you see the Code of Ethics supporting resolutions to those dilemmas?

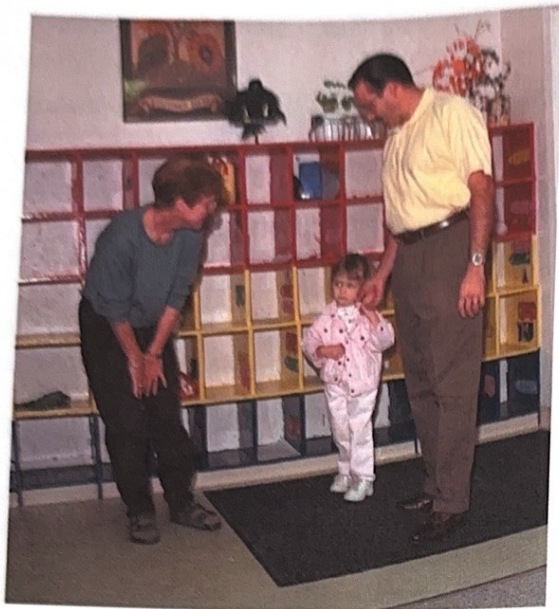
Continuing Education and Staff Development

Creative and stimulating classes are the product of teachers who continue to learn more about how to teach. After the initial stage of teaching, many teachers begin to seek new challenges and new ways to improve the quality of their teaching. Usually this search leads to some form of **continuing education**, such as participation in workshops, courses, or seminars. If time to pursue continuing education is not built into a teacher's schedule, there may be other options:

- In-service training programs may be brought into the school setting. Resource people can be invited to lead the staff in discussions about children's behavior, parent relationships, assessment charts, science curricula, and creating multicultural classrooms.
- Various members of the teaching staff can develop a program of their own, offering their expertise to fellow faculty at an in-service meeting.
- A computer specialist, art resource teacher, or multicultural expert can be invited to visit the



Ethical questions arise daily. This child has been taught to hit back if anyone hits him. What does the teacher say to him? How should this situation be handled?



Through frequent contacts with teachers and administrators, parents can become aware of the importance of professional training and development for early childhood educators.

- classrooms, instructing children and providing staff with some useful ideas and plans.
- A family therapist can be invited to speak at a staff meeting about strategies for supporting families in crisis.
- A library for teachers, stocked with professional books, journals (such as *Young Children*), and newspapers (such as *Education Week*), can provide a teacher with the means to keep up with current trends and practices and to improve teaching skills in the classroom.
- Parents who are professionals in a variety of fields can be utilized whenever possible to enrich the knowledge and skills of the staff.

Professional Affiliations

Teachers who perceive themselves as professionals may choose to join one of the professional organizations related to the early childhood field. One of the largest, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has local and state affiliate groups through which one can become a member. NAEYC offers a range of services to its members, including conferences and publications such as the journal *Young Children*. The Association for

Childhood Education International (ACEI) has a similar function, whereas the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) focuses on child psychology, research, and development.

There are a number of organizations concerned with young children, teachers, and issues related to the early childhood profession. Abundant resources are available from these groups, and their Web sites at the end of this chapter and in Appendix D.

Career Options

The need for quality programs for young children has never been greater and the demand for early childhood specialists will continue, fostered by national attention to the issues of children and families. If you are considering a career in early childhood, the options are many and varied. Figure 5-3 lists some of the possibilities that exist in this profession.

EVALUATING TEACHERS: A KEY TO QUALITY

It is understood that teachers are the *single most important* factor in determining program quality. What makes "the effective teacher" has no one simple answer. Earlier sections in this chapter describe important attributes of the teacher. How these can be assessed is complicated, but assessing them is necessary to ensure the highest quality of teaching. There are ways to evaluate teachers that guide them toward more effective teaching in their work with children, coworkers, parents, and administrators.

Think of teachers as conductors of a symphony orchestra. They do not compose the music. They do not design or build the instruments, nor do they decide which ones will be played in the orchestra pit. They may even have limited choice of the music that will be played. Yet it is their job to lead a group of musicians through a medley of songs, bringing out the best in each musician, all under the intense scrutiny of a critical audience. Teachers must do this with care and expertise under the watchful eyes of parents, boards, and funding agencies.

Many teachers do this well, often with little training except direct experience. As teachers' effectiveness is measured, they can learn better techniques for working with children and for planning quality environments and programs. The process for establishing and meeting these goals is evaluation. Teacher evaluation forms in this chapter can be adapted for use with student teachers

Direct Services to Children and Families

Teacher in early childhood program
 Director of child care facility, nursery school,
 Montessori program
 Family day care provider
 Nanny or au pair
 Foster parent
 Social worker/adoption agent
 Pediatric nurse/school nurse
 Family therapist/parent educator
 Pediatrician
 Parent educator
 Early intervention specialist
 Recreation leader
 Play group leader
 Home visitor

Community Involvement

State/local licensing worker
 Legislative advocate
 Child care law specialist
 ECE environmental consultant
 Interior designer for children's spaces
 Government planning agent on children's issues
 Consultant in bilingual education, multiculturalism
 Nutrition specialist for children
 Child care referral counselor

Indirect Services to Children and Families

Curriculum specialist
 Instructional specialist—computers
 Child development researcher
 Early childhood education specialist
 Program consultant
 Consumer advocate
 Teacher trainer, 2- and 4-year colleges
 Consultant
 Resource and referral programs
 State and national departments of education
 and/or human services

Other Options

Communications consultant
 Script writer/editor
 Freelance writer
 Children's book author
 Children's photographer
 Microcomputer specialist/program consultant

Figure 5-3 There are many challenges in a variety of careers awaiting the early childhood professional. (Adapted from "Career Options in Early Childhood Education" by Dianne Widmeyer Eyer. In *Beginnings & Beyond: Foundations in Early Childhood Education*, Third edition, p. 170. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.)

and aides. Re-read the introduction to evaluation in Chapter 2, on pages 75–81, for other insights.

A good evaluation process helps to:

- Challenge methods, assumptions, and purposes.
- Provide information by which to rate performance and quality.
- Monitor progress, growth, and planning.
- Set goals to meet for improving performance and quality.
- Identify ways to support and provide follow-up for change.

Components of a Good Evaluation

Certain elements are common to all evaluations. The following criteria serve as a guideline to an effective evaluation process:

1. *Select who and what will be evaluated.* Decide how often and under what circumstances the evaluation will take place.
2. *Have a clear purpose or motive.* Know the reasons for making an evaluation and consider who and what will benefit from the process. State what you expect to gain from it.
3. *Decide how the data will be collected.* Have a good understanding of the process or format that will be used. Be clear about who will collect the data and make the report. Some sample evaluations are found in this chapter.
4. *Know what use will be made of the evaluation.* Be aware of what decisions will be made from the results. Know who receives this information and how they will interpret it.

5. *State goals clearly.* Evaluators should make sure goals and objectives are outlined in ways that can be measured and observed easily and state behavioral goals in terms of what the person will do. The person being evaluated should be equally clear in their responses to the evaluation instrument(s).
6. *Make a plan.* Be prepared to act. Use the results to motivate people to put into action what they have learned from the evaluation. Set new goals based on the evaluation. Set up a timetable to check progress on a regular basis.

The important point to remember is that evaluation should be a continuous process, for without follow-through, long-lasting improvement is unlikely to occur. Take a look at Figure 5-4 to see how a **feedback loop** works for an evaluation process.

Why Evaluate?

Teachers are evaluated for several reasons. The end result of an assessment may be setting guidelines for what kinds of teaching are expected. Or the intent of an evaluation might be to set clear goals for job improvement. The first part of any effective evaluation procedure is a *statement of purpose*.

To Describe Job Responsibilities

It is essential for teachers to understand their job to do it well. A good job description outlines what is expected. One purpose of an evaluation is to see how those expectations are being met.

In an infant and toddler center, for example, teachers try to help children learn to separate comfortably from their parents. Evaluation in this setting could focus on the exact skills needed to implement this goal.

How does a teacher help a parent separate from a young child? What environmental cues does the teacher prepare? How is the child in distress comforted? What teaching strategies are important?

Evaluation for specifying job responsibilities is a part of one's professional self-definition as well as a clarification of actual duties. Studying ourselves helps us know who we are and what we do. Assessing job responsibilities aids in this process.

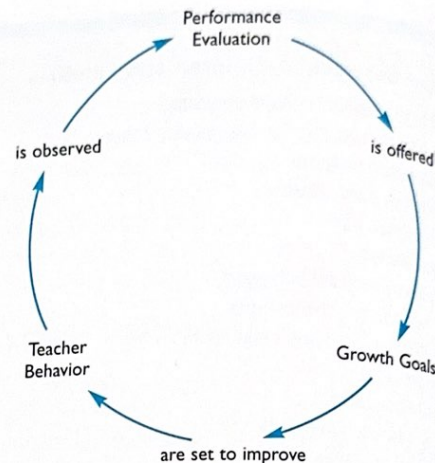


Figure 5-4 A feedback loop is a continuous cycle in which teacher behavior is observed for a performance evaluation. The evaluation is offered through growth goals, which are set in order to affect teacher behavior. Thus, the circle is continuous, with each part helping the next.

To Monitor Job Effectiveness

Once clear guidelines are set for teaching expectations, a method is needed to monitor actual teaching. Most evaluation systems attempt to check teacher effectiveness. It is important to establish a process for analyzing how teachers are doing their jobs.

This process may vary from school to school. In some schools, teaching effectiveness is measured, in part, by child achievement, such as how children score on tests. Other centers may solicit parent opinion. A teacher's coworkers may be part of an assessment team. For the most part, an evaluation for job effectiveness will include an observation of teaching time with children.

To Clarify Strengths and Weaknesses

An evaluation procedure preferred by many teachers is one that identifies specific areas of strength and weakness. Feedback about actual teaching and other job responsibilities is helpful to all teachers, whether beginners or experienced personnel. An assessment that offers teachers information about how to perform their job better contributes to job competence and satisfaction. By recognizing strengths, teachers



Evaluating teachers can help set professional growth goals and clarify a teacher's strengths and areas of improvement.

 receive positive feedback for high-quality work.¹ By identifying weaknesses, they can begin to set realistic goals for improvement.

To Create a Plan for Professional Development

One function of teacher evaluation is to foster professional development. Teachers do not become "good" and then stay that way for life. Regardless of their stage of development, teachers need goals in order to continually improve.

To be effective, goal setting must be embedded in an on-going system of professional development. Caruso and Fawcett (1999) note that staff development must also be integrated with the overall goals of the center or program for which a teacher is being evaluated.

Professional development takes into consideration the various stages of expertise and development of the individuals on the staff. A career-ladder plan, adopted by NAEYC in 1993, takes into account the diversity of education,

training, and experience of early childhood professionals. The ladder sets out steps individuals can take to assume more responsibility as they become more qualified and prepared. This lattice framework promotes a system of professional development, which can motivate early childhood professionals at all levels toward professional growth (Willer, 1994).

To Determine Employment

An evaluation can also be used to decide whether teachers should be retained, promoted, or released. Assessment procedures are an administrator's most valuable tools in making that decision. A clear and effective evaluation tool enables the administrator to monitor performance and target specific areas for improvement. The administrator then has a fair and equitable way to determine the promotional status of each employee.

To Meet Accreditation Requirements

Many programs seek accreditation by organizations whose standards they embrace. NAEYC is the leading accrediting body for early childhood programs through its National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The self-study aspect of the accreditation process includes a teacher's self-assessment, the director's assessment of the teaching staff, and the teacher's assessment of the director. The criteria in the self-study provides the standards against which these evaluations are made, providing concrete ways to measure quality.

Critical Issues in Teacher Evaluation

How to evaluate is an important issue in teacher assessment. A system for evaluating employees can be one of trust and mutual respect or of anxiety and tension. The method often determines how successful the entire evaluation will be.



¹ Teacher expectations can have a substantial effect on children's behavior and self-esteem. Check yourself for biases: how you interact with children is key to your effectiveness, and discriminatory interactions must be noted and remedied.



A teacher's self-evaluation provides an opportunity to improve her effectiveness with children.

Preliminary Steps

To begin with, a school follows the same guidelines for developing a teacher evaluation as for child assessment (see Chapter 6). That is, the process includes determining a purpose, establishing who will collect the data and how, and clarifying how the evaluation will be used. In the assessment of teachers, the important components are: purpose (as described in Chapter 2), evaluators, process, and follow-through.

Evaluators

Several models have been developed around the issue of who will assess teacher performance.

Self-Evaluation. Self-assessment is used in the Child Development Associate's evaluation system for these reasons (Ward & CDA staff, 1976):

- The candidate is a valid source of information for use in assessment. Certain information is available only from the candidate's perspective.
- The candidate is able to clarify information on his or her performance, thereby adding to the assessment team's evidence for a valid decision.
- The candidate is better able to identify strengths and weaknesses and to receive recommendations for continued professional growth.

Figure 5-5 illustrates one type of systematic self-assessment. Another self-assessment technique, somewhat less formal, is to ask questions about yourself and your job, such as:

- What aspects of my work give me the greatest sense of satisfaction and achievement?
- What changes in my work assignment would increase my contribution to the school and my own personal satisfaction?
- What additional development activities would help me do a more effective job or prepare me for the next step on my career path?
- What would improve the effectiveness and quality of my relationship with my supervisor? (Young-Holt, Spitz, & Heffron, 1983).

The answers to these few questions can provide a solid base for discussion between teacher and supervisor or assessment team.

One drawback of self-assessment is its subjectivity. We see ourselves too closely and too personally to be able to be entirely objective about our teaching. Therefore, self-assessment must be accompanied by other evaluating feedback.

Supervisory Evaluation. Supervisors, directors, or head teachers are usually part of the evaluation process. Job performance is an administrator's responsibility; therefore, teachers can expect their supervisors to be involved in their evaluation. Supervisors often use a single form combining a teacher's self-assessment and the supervisor's evaluation. This kind of form simplifies the paperwork and assures both teacher and supervisor that both are using the same criteria for evaluation.

Caruso and Fawcett (1999) identify a variety of formats used for evaluations; observations, conferences, videotapes, reports, portfolios, and storytelling are some of the ways to accomplish an assessment.

When selecting an appropriate format or tool, look for a balance in the categories on which a teacher is being evaluated. These usually include some of the following:

- Knowledge and application of child development principles
- Planning
- Behavior management
- Interactions with children
- Interactions with adults (other teachers, administrators, and parents)

SAMPLE SELF-EVALUATION

Rate the following items on the scale below based upon your performance in the classroom. (Note: This form allows for a yes/no response if desired. Supervisors may use this same form to rate the student after the self-evaluation.)

Superior Perf.

3

Acceptable Perf.

2

Unacceptable Perf.

1

Not Applicable

0

Relationship to Children

- ☐ I am able to understand and accept a child as he/she is and recognize individual needs.
- ☐ I use knowledge and understanding of child development principles to understand children.
- ☐ I use information regarding home, family, and sociocultural background to understand children.
- ☐ I am able to modify situations to forestall negative behavior.
- ☐ I use positive suggestions and choices to redirect behavior.
- ☐ I use prescribed limits and follow-through.
- ☐ I adapt methods of guidance to the individual and adjust guidance measures to fit the situation.
- ☐ I avoid the use of threats.
- ☐ I express positive reinforcement when appropriate.
- ☐ I can verbalize my own feelings in an honest, open, and humane manner when interacting with children.
- ☐ I avoid using baby talk.
- ☐ I relate to individual children.
- ☐ I relate to children in small groups.
- ☐ I relate to children in large groups.

Developing the Program

- ☐ I permit the children to explore materials in a variety of ways.
- ☐ I recognize and use spontaneous happenings to help children's learning.
- ☐ I make use of child development principles to plan curriculum for children.
- ☐ I offer a wide range of experiences so children can make choices according to their interests and needs.
- ☐ I allow for various levels of ability among children.
- ☐ I utilize a variety of media when developing instructional materials.
- ☐ I use a note-taking system to assist in planning and evaluating experiences for children.
- ☐ I maintain equipment and materials in good order and consider health and safety factors.

Relating to Parents

- ☐ I recognize parents by name.
- ☐ I converse with parents at appropriate times.
- ☐ I incorporate the cultural backgrounds of families into the program.
- ☐ I facilitate a free flow of information between staff and parents.
- ☐ I communicate concerns to parents in both written and verbal forms.
- ☐ I recognize and appreciate parental values and priorities for their children.
- ☐ I communicate children's school experiences to parents.

Administration and Professional Development

- ☐ I recognize and use policies and procedures of the program.
- ☐ I attend and participate in staff meetings.
- ☐ I inform the administrative staff correctly of illness, time off, vacation, and so forth.
- ☐ I am a member of at least one professional organization in the field of early childhood.
- ☐ I attend meetings conducted by professional groups.
- ☐ I make use of professional resources and contacts.
- ☐ I maintain professional confidentiality and discretion.

(continues)

Figure 5-5 Self-evaluation can be an insightful and useful process. (Adapted from Young-Holt, C., Spitz, G., & Hefron, M. C. [1983]. *A model for staff evaluation, validation, and growth*. Palo Alto, CA: Center for the Study of Self-Esteem.)