



leaving her unsure about what to do, since she can't leave them alone inside. On the playground, Booth punches Elijah hard in the stomach, seemingly for no reason. Furious but feeling totally incompetent, Sue grabs Booth by the arms and repeatedly says, "Say you're sorry!" while Booth just smirks and Elijah cries loudly. Both teachers can't wait for naptime, but when they turn out the lights, the ensuing chaos becomes overwhelming. Children refuse to stay on their cots, grab toys off the shelves, talk loudly, and make it impossible for even the most exhausted to sleep. Sue will remember this day vividly, because it is one of the longest days of her life. Unfortunately, the next day will be all too similar. ■

This glimpse into Sue's classroom is not a fictional account. It is actually what happened to me on my first day of teaching many years ago. I learned very quickly that teaching young children is hard work. I also discovered that there was a lot more I needed to know to become an effective teacher.

The goal of this chapter is to help ensure that you and the children you teach do not experience days like the one described in the case study. This chapter describes research-based practices—ways of creating a caring community of learners—that make teaching young children more effective and enjoyable. To help you learn how to promote children’s social competence and address challenging behaviors, we will describe a conceptual framework—the Teaching Pyramid (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning, n.d.; Hemmeter, Snyder, Fox, & Algina, 2016). Applying this framework will help you create a caring community of learners in which young children thrive. Using these research-based, positive guidance strategies will not prevent all of the challenges you will face as a teacher, but it will help you become more calm, confident, and effective in your work with all children.



A Caring Community of Learners: The Teaching Pyramid Model

caring community of learners A group or classroom in which children and adults engage in warm, positive relationships, treat each other with respect, and learn from and with each other.

A **caring community of learners** is a group or classroom in which children and adults engage in warm, positive relationships; treat each other with respect; and learn from and with each other. The late Jim Greenman (2017), one of the foremost experts on children's environments, described early childhood programs as "caring spaces, learning places." This phrase is apt because it emphasizes a fundamental principle of early childhood education: Children's care and education are interrelated.

Wherever children are served, they are always learning and being cared for. In other words, *both/and* thinking is required. Effective early childhood programs provide *both* nurturing, responsive relationships *and* stimulating, interesting educational experiences. If children's needs for either care or learning are neglected, the program will be ineffective.

The Value of a Caring Community of Learners

Children learn and develop best in the context of a caring community of learners. Research provides strong evidence that this is the case. As we have seen, a well-known tool for