

PEARSON CUSTOM
Education

Child Development EDUC 115
Highline Community College

PEARSON

Cover Art: "Textbooks and apple" used by permission of iStock; "Teacher and students" used by permission of iStock; "Classroom, globe on desk, US flag hanging from blackboard" Copyright © 1999–2008 Getty Images, Inc. All rights reserved. "Multicolored crayons"—Courtesy of iStockphoto. "Colorful crayons"—Courtesy of iStockphoto. "Toddler boy playing with alphabet puzzle"—Courtesy of Mimi Haddon/Getty Images. "School Hallway" courtesy of Matt Symons/iStockphoto Lp. "Locker" courtesy of Jose Gil/iStockphoto Lp. Additional images courtesy of Photodisc/Getty Images, Photodisc, EyeWire, Stockbyte/Getty Images, Digital Vision, Purestock, Digital Vision/Getty Images.

Copyright © 2013 by Pearson Learning Solutions

All rights reserved.

Permission in writing must be obtained from the publisher before any part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system.

Additional copyright information is included, where applicable, as a footnote at the beginning of each chapter.

Printed in the United States of America.

V092

Please visit our website at www.pearsonlearningsolutions.com.

Attention bookstores: For permission to return any unsold stock, contact us at pe-uscustomreturns@pearson.com.

Pearson Learning Solutions, 501 Boylston Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02116

A Pearson Education Company

www.pearsoned.com

PEARSON

ISBN 10: 1-269-05490-2

ISBN 13: 978-1-269-05490-4

Table of Contents

1. Studying Early Childhood Development in a Diverse World Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	2
2. Historical Perspectives and Research in Early Childhood Development Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	14
3. Theories of Child Development Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	34
4. Genetics, Prenatal Development, and Birth Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	64
5. The Newborn Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	86
6. Infant Physical Growth and Brain Development Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	104
7. Cognitive Development in Infancy Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	126
8. Infant Language and Literacy Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	148
9. Infant Social and Emotional Development Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	168
10. Preschool Physical and Motor Development Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	196
11. Cognitive Development in the Preschool Years Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	226
12. Symbolic Thought: Play, Language, and Literacy in the Preschool Years Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	254
13. Social and Emotional Development in Preschoolers Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	294

14. Physical Growth and Motor Development in the Primary Years	328
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
15. Cognition and Schooling	354
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
16. Language, Literacy, and Schooling	392
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
17. Social and Emotional Development in the Primary Years	426
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
18. Parents, Families, and Children: A Multicultural Perspective	462
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
References	490
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
Glossary	528
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
19. Credits	536
Jeffrey Trawick-Smith	
Index	537

Studying Early Childhood Development in a Diverse World

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is early childhood development?
2. How can a knowledge of early childhood development guide interactions with children?
3. How can this knowledge guide curriculum planning?
4. How can an understanding of early childhood development guide the observation of children and the identification of special needs?
5. How can a knowledge of early childhood development promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity?
6. How can this knowledge guide advocacy and the shaping of public policy?
7. Why should professionals study child development from a multicultural perspective?

The purpose of this book is to assist present and future teachers of young children in using knowledge of child development within child care, preschool, kindergarten, and primary-grade classrooms. It is a practical guide to what young children are like and how this knowledge can be used to enhance your professional practice. My focus in this book is on diversity and development, with a major thesis being that individual children learn and behave in different ways. Children of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and those with challenging conditions and special needs vary in their language, social style, self-perceptions, and physical competence because of unique life experiences. I will describe and celebrate this diversity. A significant message I want to convey is that there is not just one way to grow up.

Understanding development and its cultural variations is essential for effective teaching, as the following story reveals:

Three 4-year-olds—Sarah, Peter, and Alonzo—are working with clay at the art table in a child care center. Their teacher, Ms. Sekar, has placed individual balls of clay on small wooden boards so that each child can select one to work with. Knowing that children at this age have a difficult time sharing, she reasons that dividing the clay into individual portions will avert conflict. She quickly discovers, however, that her careful planning has just the opposite effect.

Peter looks over with an expression of concern at Sarah's clay. "She's got more than me!" he complains to Ms. Sekar.

"Oh, no, Peter, she doesn't," she assures him. "I put just the same amount of clay in all the balls. You have just as much as she does."

Peter is not satisfied. "No! Hers is fatter!"



Ms. Sekar notices that Sarah's clay ball is pushed flatter, giving it a wide appearance. "Oh! Hers is fatter, you're right. But yours is ..."—she searches for the right word here—"...taller." She sees immediately that this argument has gone over Peter's head.

As Peter continues to protest, Alonzo discovers that he needs more clay for a sculpture he is working on. Smiling, he casually leans over and pinches off a large chunk from Peter's ball. Alonzo's actions are more than Peter can bear. "No!" he screams, beginning to cry and trying to grab back some of his clay from Alonzo. Alonzo gives a look of total surprise at Peter's outburst.

After comforting Peter, Ms. Sekar engages all three children in an elaborate negotiation: "Peter seems to be upset because he doesn't have as much clay as everyone else. What can we do about this?"

"Give me back my clay," Peter offers, still angry.

"We could put all the clay together," Alonzo suggests. Sarah agrees.

"We could try that," Ms. Sekar responds with enthusiasm. "We could make a huge ball. Then you could tear off the clay you need. What do you think?"

"What if I can't have enough?" asks Peter tearfully.

"There is so much clay," the teacher answers. "I think you'll have plenty to use. Should we try it?"

Peter finally agrees. They combine their clay into one large chunk and place it in the center of the table. As the children work, they help themselves to more clay as they need it. This seems to make everyone happy. Ms. Sekar is pleased at how cooperative these young children are in sharing from this "community" lump of clay.

This child care provider has resolved a classroom conflict by applying principles of child development. Because she has read about young children's thinking and social behavior, she is aware that 4-year-olds can be egocentric—that is, so self-oriented that they are unable to fully understand others' perspectives. Because she anticipates difficulties over sharing, she attempts to avoid conflicts by dividing the clay into individual balls. She quickly realizes, however, that she has created more problems than she has prevented.

She knows, again from child development research, that children's thinking is based on the appearance of things: what you see is what you get. From Peter's perspective, the ball

that looks fatter must contain more clay. The caregiver immediately recognizes the futility of trying to convince him that the balls are of equal size.

In resolving the conflict between Alonzo and Peter, the teacher has relied on her knowledge of cultural diversity in child development. She knows that, in Alonzo's family, collective behavior rather than individual ownership is emphasized. Because joint ownership is the norm in Alonzo's culture, his act of taking clay is simply an innocent effort to share materials.

By involving the children in the resolution of this conflict, she has relied on new research showing that very young children can be quite cooperative and can resolve their own conflicts with adult assistance. Her final solution reflects her knowledge of the intellectual and social abilities and limitations of this age group.

This example shows that child development research and theory can be extremely useful in the classroom when applied in concert with careful observation and the wisdom of experience.

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

Anyone who spends time with children knows that they change in many ways as they grow older. What may not be as obvious is that these changes are qualitative as well as quantitative. Children do not simply acquire more knowledge, social ability, or physical proficiency with age; their thinking and behavior become qualitatively different over time.

One way to understand qualitative change in development is to reflect on your own life experience. Think back to what you were like 10 years ago. Are you the same person? How have you changed? It is likely that you are quantitatively different; you have more knowledge, a broader repertoire of social skills, or even—like me—a few new gray hairs. But you are also likely to be qualitatively different. Your interests have probably changed. You probably solve problems differently or use new methods to learn. You may have a clearer picture of your

Teachers can apply knowledge of child development to curriculum planning and classroom interaction.



career goals. Children also become very different human beings with each developmental period, as the following vignette illustrates:

Three-year-old Daisuke shows great anxiety every time the heater blower turns on in his child care center. His caregiver intervenes to help assuage his fears.

- DAISUKE: I don't like that thing!
 CAREGIVER: Yes. That heater is old and loud. It's just a heater, though. Let me show you. (Leads the child over to the heating unit) See? It's just a machine.
 DAISUKE: Just an old machine.
 CAREGIVER: That's right. Can you see down inside here? See the parts of the machine in there? That's what makes the noise.
 DAISUKE: Yeah. The machine goes r-r-r-r. (Makes a blower noise)
 CAREGIVER: Right. So when it comes on, you won't be afraid, right?
 DAISUKE: Yeah.

Minutes later, the blower turns on again. Daisuke clings to the caregiver in terror.

Approximately a year later, the caregiver has another conversation about the blower with this same child.

- DAISUKE: Remember that heater? (Points to the heating unit)
 CAREGIVER: Sure. You didn't like the noise it made.
 DAISUKE: I was afraid of it when I was little. I thought it was a...monster. (Laughs)
 CAREGIVER: I remember that.
 DAISUKE: It's just the machine inside that makes that awful racket!

Why is this child, at age 4, no longer afraid of the heater? It isn't just because he has more knowledge of how it works. Indeed, he had learned a good deal about the heater from his caregiver when he was only 3. He could even verbalize that it was "just an old machine" that made a frightening noise. Yet his fear persisted. At age 4, he is able to think in a completely different way. His intellectual abilities have changed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. He is no longer completely fooled by how things look or sound (i.e., if the blower sounds like a monster, it must be a monster). He can now use a new kind of reasoning to overcome the misleading appearance of things (i.e., the blower may sound like a monster, but it is really a machine making noise).

In all areas of development, children gradually transform into unique individuals. At each stage, they pose new and fascinating challenges for parents and professionals. What we expect of them, how we interact with them, what we plan for them to do, and how we meet their social and emotional needs and those of their families are all influenced by a knowledge of these qualitative changes in development.

In this book, **development** is defined as the process by which humans change both qualitatively and quantitatively as they grow older. It is not just adding more knowledge or ability with time; it is the process of transforming, of becoming completely new. **Early childhood development** is defined as the development of children from conception and birth through age 8.

WHY STUDY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

This book is intended to be a practical guide for teachers and other professionals working with young children and their families. It addresses developmental problems and issues in the classroom. It can be used to guide professional practice in at least five ways, as summarized in Table 1-1.

development: The process by which humans change both qualitatively and quantitatively as they grow older.

early childhood development: The development of children from conception and birth through age 8.

TABLE 1-1
Five Ways This
Book Can Guide
Professional
Practice

The Book Can Guide	Example
Interactions with children	A teacher reads in Chapter 12 that the preschool years are a period of magical thinking and irrational fears. So, when a 4-year-old shows anxiety about going onto the playground, she understands the source of the problem and designs a sympathetic, cognitive-based strategy to alleviate the child's fear.
Curriculum planning	A teacher is designing a science activity to teach about seeds in a primary-grade classroom. He reads in Chapter 14 that most children of this age enjoy playing games with rules, so he develops a science board game. He also reads that there are cultural differences in regard to competition, so he designs the game so that all children win and competition is minimized.
Observation and identification of children with special needs	Based on information in Chapter 9, an infant caregiver accurately identifies a 7-month-old who has not become securely attached to her parents. Guided by research, she implements a warmth and responsiveness strategy to help the child bond to others.
Understanding and appreciation of diversity	A primary-grade teacher plans to have children read independent research reports to the whole class. However, he reads in Chapter 16 that children of some culture groups express themselves using a storytelling style. So, he gives students an option of telling the group about their projects.
Advocacy and the shaping of public policy	A kindergarten teacher is concerned about the problem of bullying on the playground and in the school bus. Citing research from Chapter 13 showing that this negative social behavior forms very early in life, she advocates for a preschool to grade 12 antibullying program at a local school board meeting.

A Guide to Interactions with Children

We know that young children think and act differently from adults. They use a different form of language, interact with other people in distinct ways, and apply unique meanings to social events. The things that make them worry, cry, or laugh are unique and sometimes unpredictable. Their interests and motivations are peculiar to their developmental level. They have a great need to scream and run and play, to throw things, and to joke and giggle with peers. Without a deep understanding of what young children are like, adults will have difficulty communicating with and comforting them, challenging their thinking, and helping them solve problems with peers. The following story shows how a thorough and sympathetic understanding of childhood can enhance professional practice:

Janny and Molly are playing together in the block area of a kindergarten classroom. Janny has just knocked down Molly's block structure, causing great upset. The teacher quickly moves over to the area as a loud conflict ensues.

MOLLY: (Crying) Janny, you kicked my building. I'm going to kick yours! (Angrily kicks at Janny's blocks!)

JANNY: No! (Begins to cry and pushes Molly)

- TEACHER: (Moving between the two children) Oh! You are both so angry. What's up here?
- MOLLY: She knocked down my building. (Screaming at Janny) I hate you!
- JANNY: (Crying, speaking to the teacher) She pushed me!
- MOLLY: You knocked over my building, Janny!
- TEACHER: (To Molly) I know you must be so upset. You worked very hard on that building.
- MOLLY: And Janny knocked it down.
- TEACHER: Yes. But she wasn't trying to, were you Janny?
- JANNY: No. And she just pushed me.
- TEACHER: (To Janny) Well, she was very angry. (To Molly) I don't think Janny meant to knock down your building. Sometimes these accidents happen. What can we do here?
- MOLLY: Well... Janny has to build it.
- TEACHER: (To Janny) Can you help Molly rebuild her building?
- JANNY: Okay. And maybe we could make a queen's castle.
- MOLLY: (In an enthused tone) All right.

In responding to this conflict, the teacher has applied an understanding of the unique ways children interpret and solve social problems. She knows that young children sometimes assign hostile intent when accidents occur. Molly truly believes that Janny intended to destroy her block structure. Instead of reprimanding Molly for pushing, then, the teacher acknowledges how angry and upset she must be. She also points out to Molly that the toppling of the blocks was accidental. She knows that helping a child read social situations more accurately will promote positive social development.

This caregiver also applies knowledge of how very young children resolve conflicts. She keeps Janny involved in the discussion, aware that children are often able to settle their own disputes with adult assistance. She also knows that anger toward peers rarely lasts long at this age. Indeed, within a short period of time, the two children have worked out a reconciliation. Had the teacher quickly separated these angry children, a wonderful opportunity for learning conflict resolution skills would have been missed.

A Guide to Curriculum Planning

The ideas presented in this book can also guide curriculum planning. A full understanding of the thinking and behavior of young children is critical in developing activities and materials that are appropriate for this age group. Overlooking developmental characteristics can lead to an inappropriate curriculum, or what Elkind (2007) calls "miseducation" and Sutton-Smith (1999) refers to as "cognitive child labor." Classrooms that present young children with taxing, passive, and overly abstract academic activities still exist. Such classrooms do not reflect a knowledge of child development.

The following vignette illustrates how a teacher's understanding of typical and atypical child development enhances curriculum:

A preschool teacher sets out trays of cornmeal for children to play with. They can draw in the cornmeal, wipe away their marks, and draw again. A child who is experiencing delayed development of large motor skills is attempting to join another child in this activity. As he tries to draw, he knocks the tray to the floor, and the cornmeal spills out. His peer expresses concern.

- RUBEY: Look! He spilled it all out!
- TAYLOR: (Looks down, says nothing)
- TEACHER: Oops! That tray slides off the table so easily.

- RUBEY: He knocked it!
- TEACHER: It was an accident. I have that problem sometimes. I've knocked things off a slippery table. What can we do to attach the tray so it doesn't slide?
- TAYLOR: Glue it, I think.
- TEACHER: Well, then the tray would stay stuck forever. How about if I clamp it? (She retrieves a metal clamp from the woodworking area, clamps the tray to the table, and adds more cornmeal) There. Try that.

The two children draw in the cornmeal for many minutes without further spills.

Here the teacher has provided an appropriate learning material that reflects an understanding of young children's development. The activity is concrete and open ended and, therefore, meets the learning needs of children of this age. The activity also reflects an understanding that end products are not as important to young children as the process of creating. A positive feature of the cornmeal activity is that children can create and re-create many times without concern about finished products.

Based on observations and an understanding of the development of children with special needs, the teacher has quickly assessed that Taylor's motor limitations make this activity inaccessible to him. Her knowledge of motor development has sensitized her to developmental delays and has guided her adaptation of materials to meet his special needs.

A Guide to Observing Children and Identifying Special Needs

Observation is the cornerstone of effective teaching. Teachers and child care providers usually base intervention and curriculum planning decisions on the careful observation of children's developmental needs. This book assists professionals in observing children. It suggests key areas of development to study and describes the diverse behaviors and characteristics that can be expected at various developmental levels. In addition, it guides teachers in identifying children with special needs. Certain behaviors suggest developmental delay or at-risk status. An infant who displays very little motor activity, a preschooler who is limited in language, or an elementary school child who is rejected by peers may require special intervention. Focused observation not only can identify these potential problems but also can suggest causes and remediation.

In the following example, a caregiver uses child development research to identify a child with special needs:

A 5-month-old has just been enrolled in a child care center. Her caregiver spends much time observing her during her first few days. He notices that the infant is less alert and responsive to adult contact than the other babies. He has read that this is an age when most infants show great interest in other people. He expects to see much smiling, cooing, and other social behaviors.

He knows that social interaction varies across cultures. For example, in some families, babies are held or spoken to less often. However, babies of all cultures have some mechanism for making contact with other people, and this infant does not respond at all to his efforts to interact.

The caregiver discusses his concerns with the infant's parents. Together they seek assistance from a medical/social service team in the community. An assessment reveals that the infant has a hearing impairment. With this information, the caregiver can adapt interactions to meet the child's special needs. He focuses more on physical and visual stimulation, using touch more than language to make contact.

A Guide to Understanding and Appreciating Diversity

This book can also help teachers recognize and appreciate the wide variety of behaviors and characteristics that are typical among a given group of children. A fundamental message of the book is that no two children are alike. Behaviors and characteristics vary because of temperament, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and a host of other factors. Children are not deficient or at risk because they develop in unique directions. They may display alternative ways of interacting with the world because of their life experience.

Knowledge of child development ultimately helps teachers be sensitive to typical variations in child behavior, as the following story reveals:

A 5-year-old Japanese American child, Misaka, has just been pushed off a tire swing on the playground at school. After discussing the event with the aggressor, the teacher attempts to comfort the victim.

Teacher: Are you all right, Misaka?
 MISAKA: (Smiles broadly, says nothing)
 TEACHER: It looks like you're okay. Did you get hurt?
 MISAKA: (Continues to smile, still does not speak)
 Teacher: Something doesn't seem quite right here. Why don't we sit together for a few minutes and relax. (Pulls the child onto her lap)

After several minutes of sitting together, Misaka begins to speak to the teacher.

Misaka: (Tears forming in his eyes) He pushed me off.
 TEACHER: Yes. I'll bet that hurt.
 MISAKA: (In an angry tone) I don't like him!
 TEACHER: You really sound angry. Let's talk about this a little.

The teacher and Misaka quietly discuss the incident until playground time is over.

Initially, this teacher misreads Misaka's smile as a sign that he is happy and unaffected by the aggression. She then remembers that smiling can mean different things in different cultures. In some Japanese American families, a smile is used to conceal embarrassment, sorrow, or anger. The teacher wisely stays with and nurtures the child until he is ready to express his feelings.

A Guide to Advocacy and the Shaping of Public Policy

Many teachers and caregivers see their professional roles as extending beyond the four walls of their classrooms (NAEYC, 2004; Robinson & Stark, 2002). They recognize that they must bring about change in the community and the larger society in order to improve the lives of children and families. Often, they become advocates who lobby policymakers, write letters to the editors of their local newspapers, participate in political action groups, or campaign for candidates who support programs for children. This book serves as a guide for such advocacy. Research and theories cited in these chapters show that working to improve community services and to influence public policy will have a direct impact on children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 2006; J. L. Robinson, 2000; Roosa, 2000). Each chapter presents ideas for advocacy and the shaping of public policy to benefit children and families.

In the following vignette, a teacher uses his knowledge of children's physical development and health to support important legislation:

A second-grade teacher is concerned about one of his students, Giovanni, who has been suffering persistent illnesses, including an ear infection that comes and goes. The teacher is aware that illness is a leading cause of children missing school and, thus,

falling behind in their learning. He knows that this is a particular problem for children who live in poverty, like Giovanni. If Giovanni remains unhealthy, his learning and development will be seriously impaired.

The teacher talks with Giovanni's mother, a single parent, about the problem and is startled by her response.

Mother: I just try to keep Giovanni in bed so he can get better. That's all I can do when he gets sick.

TEACHER: He really needs to see a doctor.

MOTHER: Can't afford a doctor for every little thing.

TEACHER: But this is pretty serious. These ear infections, especially.

MOTHER: I don't have any insurance. And the state says I make too much money to get any help from them.

TEACHER: Isn't there a special state program?

Mother: Yeah, there was, but they took that away.

The teacher is surprised. Surely Giovanni's mother doesn't make so much from her low-paying job that her family can't receive free medical services. On investigating, he learns Giovanni's mother is correct. The new governor in the state, in an effort to address a budget deficit, has pushed for an end to the "Healthy Kids" program that provides health insurance for children of the working poor.

The teacher organizes a campaign among colleagues and parents in the school to reinstate this program. They call legislators, attend a public hearing, and write letters to the local newspaper. One of their most powerful arguments is that illness can undermine goals for education in the state—goals that the governor champions. Absences will affect achievement test scores and threaten state and federal mandates for school improvement, they point out. With the help of similar groups throughout the state, they eventually succeed. The legislature overwhelmingly votes to reinstate the program, with the governor's support.

This teacher is inspired to take action by his knowledge that illness is a serious threat to learning and development. He uses research on poor health, absence, and school success to convince the legislators that providing health insurance for all children will help meet a politically popular goal.

WHY STUDY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT FROM A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE?

During this new century, children of traditionally underrepresented groups—often called minorities—will constitute a new majority within the United States. Currently, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans constitute one-third of the U.S. population. It is projected that, within 50 years, they will account for more than half (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007)! Because families of these ethnic backgrounds are generally younger than those of other cultural groups, their children will represent a growing percentage of the preschool and school-age population. As families become more diverse, child and family professionals must be prepared to meet their unique needs.

Children of different cultures vary in the ways they communicate and interact with adults and peers (Klein & Chen, 2001), in how they play and learn (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006; Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005; Rakoczy, 2005), and in how they view teachers and school (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Parental socialization practices

and beliefs vary markedly across cultures (Deater-Deckard, 2005; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006). Professionals must come to understand, appreciate, and show sensitivity to these differences as they interact with children and families. They must devise ways to provide their students with knowledge of people of other cultures and with positive and significant cross-cultural experiences.

Unfortunately, children of color are often underrepresented or misrepresented in child development research (McLoyd, 2006; M. B. Spencer, 2006). Many studies are conducted with only white, middle-class children (Trawick-Smith, 1993). Some textbooks and articles on children and families have been found to reflect a Euro-American bias in which the behaviors and development of white, middle-class children are considered typical and those of other cultures are viewed as “abnormal, incompetent, and change worthy” (McLoyd, 1990b, p. 263). Children from non-European cultures or from low socioeconomic backgrounds have been considered “culturally deprived” (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966) because they speak, learn, or interact with peers in ways that are different from those of white, middle-class children. This belief has led some teachers and child care providers to confuse cultural differences with developmental deficits.

A major purpose of this book is to help professionals appreciate that many developmental variations are, in fact, differences that can be explained by life experience. These differences are quite often adaptive. Unique behavior, language, and learning patterns of children of a particular cultural group are acquired for a reason (McLoyd, 2006; Trawick-Smith & Lisi, 1994; Quintana et al., 2006). They help the child get along in his or her family and community and are valued, expected, and encouraged by parents, other adults, and peers. Behaviors that vary from those of children in mainstream society may be very typical within the child’s own cultural milieu.

In this book, great care has been taken to differentiate between developmental deficits—real, special needs that can and should be addressed through intervention—and cultural differences—variations in development that are part of the rich cultural history of children



Knowledge of child development can help teachers to understand and appreciate diversity.

unique/diverse needs:

The distinct needs of each individual child that are not related to background or disability.

special needs: The needs of children that result from developmental delays or disabilities.

cultural/ethnic diversity:

Variations in development and behavior that are due to a child's cultural background.

socioeconomic status

(SES): A measure of a family's overall economic and social status, determined by level of education, income, place of residence, and occupation of primary wage earners.

children of color/children of historically underrepresented groups:

Children of non-European, non-Caucasian ethnic background. These phrases replace the traditional word *minority*.

and families. The following definitions of key phrases used in this book will help clarify distinctions among different sources of diversity:

- **Unique diverse needs.** These phrases refer to the social, emotional, and learning needs of all individuals regardless of gender, ethnicity, or intellectual ability. Each individual within a classroom will have unique ways of learning or interacting with others, and in no group of students will all individuals be alike.
- **Special needs.** This refers to the needs of children with social, emotional, intellectual, or physical delays or disabilities. The term *special* is borrowed from the field of special education. This terminology should not be confused with *cultural needs*. You should not assume that children of some ethnic groups necessarily have special needs.
- **Cultural/ethnic diversity.** These phrases refer to variations in needs or play and the learning styles of children of various cultural groups. For example, children of different cultures have different styles of communicating. *Diversity* must not be confused with *deficit*. Differences across cultures are just that—differences to be celebrated, not deficits to be remediated.
- **Socioeconomic status (SES).** This is a measure of a family's overall economic and social status, determined by level of education, income, place of residence, and the occupation of primary wage earners. Children's development will vary because of socioeconomic status. Children of poverty, for example, will have unique needs, as will those from extremely wealthy families. *Socioeconomic status* must not be confused with *cultural or ethnic diversity*. Children of color, for example, are not necessarily of low socioeconomic status. These phrases also must not be associated with *special needs*; children of poverty do not automatically have developmental delays.
- **Children of color/children of historically underrepresented groups.** These phrases will be used in this book to replace the traditional word *minority* to describe children of non-European, non-Caucasian ethnic background. Although cumbersome, they are more accurate because persons of color could soon represent a majority of the population in some sections of the United States. In addition, these terms are viewed as more positive. All too often, *minority* is construed as a negative term.

SUMMARY

Development is a process by which humans change qualitatively and quantitatively over time. A knowledge of this process helps professionals interact with young children in effective ways, plan curriculum, observe and identify students with special needs, understand and appreciate cultural diversity, and participate in

advocacy and the shaping of public policy. Studying child development from a multicultural perspective is important because the United States is becoming more diverse and there are cultural variations in the ways children think, learn, play, interact, and communicate.

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

CRITICAL CONCEPT 1

Development is defined as the process by which humans change as they grow older. This change is not just quantitative in nature; humans do not just acquire more knowledge and ability but change qualitatively as well. At each stage, humans think, behave, and perceive the world very differently.

Application #1 Assess qualitative changes in your students over time, not just quantitative increases in knowledge

as measured by achievement or IQ tests. Observe how children solve math problems or think through scientific experiments, for example. You will learn more about development than if you only check to see if children get the right answer.

Application #2 Provide classroom experiences that help children think, interact with peers, and feel good about themselves. Activities that merely focus on learning facts may not promote qualitative aspects of development.

CRITICAL CONCEPT 2

A wealth of research exists on what children are like and how they develop in the early years. This research can guide professional practice.

Application #1 Child development research can guide you in interacting with children in ways that promote positive behavior and learning.

Application #2 Child development research can assist you in creating a developmentally appropriate curriculum—one that excites, engages, and challenges your students.

Application #3 Child development research can help you observe typical and atypical development and identify children who have special needs—developmental delays or disabilities that may require special intervention.

Application #4 Child development research can help you understand and appreciate cultural and developmental diversity and distinguish cultural differences from developmental deficits.

Application #5 Child development research can guide you in advocacy activities and the shaping of public policy. You can use research findings to sway public opinion and persuade legislators to enact legislation that supports children and families.

CRITICAL CONCEPT 3

Since the American population is becoming more diverse, it is important for professionals to study child development from a multicultural perspective. Children of different cultures vary in the ways they communicate and interact with adults and peers, in how they play and learn, and in how they view teachers and school. Parenting practices and beliefs vary across cultures as well.

Application #1 Adapt your interactions and the activities you plan for children to meet unique cultural needs. Based on research on developmental diversity, you can create culturally sensitive classrooms by modifying learning experiences, classroom management strategies, communication styles, methods of assessment, and modes of interacting with parents and families.

Application #2 Be cautious in assessing the needs of young children, carefully differentiating between cultural differences and true developmental deficits. Understand and celebrate cultural differences; avoid trying to change these. You should only address true developmental deficits through intervention or referral to specialists.

Application #3 Monitor your own attitudes and beliefs to guard against false assumptions about children. Young children of color do not always live in poverty. Children in poverty do not always have special needs. Such sweeping conclusions can lead to ineffective and insensitive caregiving and teaching.