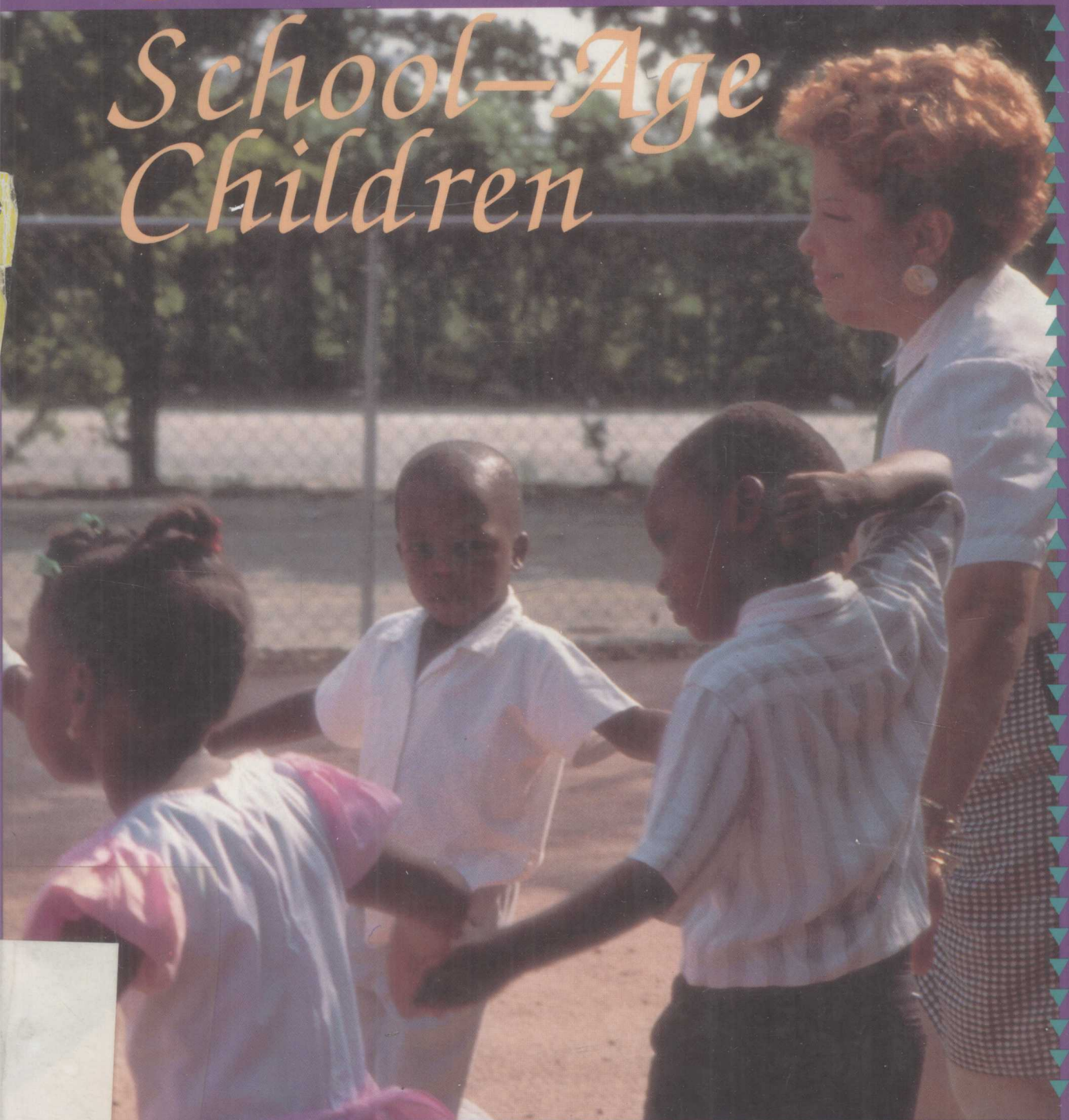


Caring for School-Age Children



Phyllis Click

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The idea for this book was first presented at a brainstorming session of Delmar authors at the 1990 National Association for the Education of Young Children conference in San Jose, California. Since its conception at that time a great deal of help from many people made it possible to bring the idea to fruition.

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About The Author

Phyllis Click, M.S.

My interest in children began as a child when I declared that I was going to have thirteen children. I didn't have thirteen children, but that interest carried over to my studies at the University of California at Berkeley. In the many years since receiving my master's degree I have continued to find children fascinating and I always learn something new when I am with them. During my working years I was both a teacher and a director in preschools and elementary schools. In college and university settings, I taught human development and other courses related to early childhood education and teaching. Now retired, I have turned to writing about what I learned through these many years.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my husband Donald Click, who worked with me during the early stages of this book. He received three degrees from the University of Southern California and spent over twenty-five years in teaching and educational administration. Through the years of our marriage, he shared my interest in children even though his degrees were in English and higher education. As a college dean he strongly supported the early childhood education department. When he became chancellor of a large college district, he championed the cause of child care on college campuses. He developed another interest when he re-

tired. He became intrigued with the power of computers as a tool for learning. He believed that children could and should learn how to use a computer and spent many hours with our grandchildren using one of our computers.

Although I finished a good part of this book myself after the death of my husband, his input is still present. Several of the chapters are very much as he wrote them, others start with our combined ideas. I hope you will find our joint effort both useful and worthwhile.

Phyllis Click
July, 1993

INTRODUCTION

When we were first developing ideas for this book, my husband and I visited several after-school settings in our community. We saw some good programs and some we would not recommend to anyone. We also met children who were delighted to be in after-school child care and others who hated every minute. At one school we met Kristen and Brian who are both nine years old. Each had a very decided opinion about being in child care.

With conviction in his voice and his hands slightly clenched, nine-year-old Brian declared loudly, "I hate everything." When he got no reaction from us, he amended that statement to "Well, there are two things I like, soccer and football. I hate activities we have to do. Well, sometimes I like to play Carom® (a table top board game)." Blonde-haired Kristen, who is also nine, smiled tolerantly while listening to Brian. She then said, "I really like being here because I have a lot of friends. We can play games and do art. What I really like is to paint." Another Brian, seven years old, sat across the table listening to these two older children. At first he said, "I like everything," but then changed to "I like what he likes (pointing to the first Brian). We like the same things."

This conversation epitomizes the problems of meeting the needs of a diverse group of children in an after-school child-care setting. The older Brian would probably be happier if he could be in his own neighborhood, hanging out with his friends and playing football or soccer. The younger Brian is still ready to accept everything but is beginning to be influenced by his older friend. Kristen loves art activities and the opportunity to make friends. However, these children have no choice. They are in child care because their parents are working. It is up to their caregivers to meet the needs of each of them as much of the time as possible.

Therefore, this book is designed to help you, the teacher/caregiver, to plan and implement a program that will satisfy as many of the children you work with as possible. It will also be helpful to persons who are in an administrative position: directors, principals, managers, or leaders. Section I gives you an overview of child care and its participants. You will read about the variety of programs that have been developed for school-age children. They range from small family day-care homes to extensive programs sponsored by local school districts. You will also find a review of the growth and development of children during the years between five and twelve. This is not meant to be a thorough study of development, but rather a reminder of what you learn in a course on human development. You will also meet the families who nurture these children. Today's families are not always what you may have experienced. Lastly, Section I outlines the characteristics of an effective teacher/caregiver.

Section II helps you understand the basics, the things you need before turning your attention to the children. You will learn a little about budgets, where the money comes from and where it goes. You will find help in planning a curriculum that is appropriate for the developmental level of school-age children. The last chapter of this section shows you how to organize an environment.

Section III is the practical part of this book. It presents many curriculum ideas. There are suggestions for games for both indoors and outdoors. You will find art, music, and drama activities in one chapter and science in another. One chapter deals with helping children prepare for their future roles as workers. Fitness that is the result of a healthful diet and exercise is covered in another chapter. The last chapter in this section helps you to understand and manage some of the difficult behaviors you will encounter in children. Each chapter includes a reading list of books where you will find additional information.

The final section of this book moves out of the school and into the broader community. You will learn how to use community resources to enhance your program. The final chapter presents some of the issues that professionals, parents, and politicians continue to debate as they plan for school-age child care.

We want this book to be a source of help to you, the caregiver of school-age children. Working with children of any age is rewarding. Working with “school-agers” presents some special challenges. We hope this book will not only make your job a bit easier, but more meaningful as well as more enjoyable.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

When we began writing this book, we discussed which term to use to denote the persons who care for children in after-school programs. While visiting schools, we encountered adults who were called teachers, aides, assistants, caregivers, leaders, guides, and recreational supervisors.

We chose the term *caregiver* to differentiate this person’s role from that of a teacher. That choice was made based on the belief that after-school programs should not be a duplicate of school-based experiences. Yes, caregivers *TEACH*, but they also provide a caring, nurturing environment that children particularly need when they cannot go home from school to a waiting and loving family. We feel that function is of prime importance and takes a great deal of knowledge and a person with very special characteristics. We thought of using the term *teacher/caregiver* throughout the book, but rejected that idea because it would become burdensome for the reader. We finally decided to use *caregiver* most frequently; at times we have used *teacher* or *teacher/caregiver*. We believe that you, the reader, will recognize our respect for the place that caregivers have in the lives of children.

Table of Contents

	Preface and Acknowledgements	ix
	Introduction	xiii
Section I	The People in Child Care	1
Chapter 1	Child-Care Problems and Solutions	2
	A Pressing Need for After-School Care	2
	Who Provides Child Care?	3
	In-Home Care	3
	Family Day-Care Homes	5
	Recreational Programs	5
	School Playgrounds, Libraries	6
	Child-Care Centers	7
	Clubs, Classes	7
	Private, Nonprofit Organizations	8
	Profit-Making Schools	9
	Employer-Sponsored	9
	Child Care in Other Countries	11
Chapter 2	Children: How They Grow and Develop	17
	Why Should I Know Child Development?	17
	What Are School-Age Children Really Like?	18
	Physical	18
	Language	19
	Thinking	20
	Independence	21
	Relationship With Peers	22
	Understanding the Rules of Society	23
	Family Influence	24
	Attitudes Toward School	25
	Overview of Developmental Stages	26
	Five-Seven Years Old	26
	Eight-Ten Years Old	27
	Eleven-Thirteen Years Old	29
Chapter 3	Families: Where Children Are Nurtured	33
	The Changing Family	33
	Effect of Home Environment on Children	34
	Helping Children and Their Parents	39
Chapter 4	Caregivers: Who Are They?	44
	What Do Children Really Need?	44
	Who Should Care for School-Age Children?	45
	Education and Experience	50
	The Caregiver's Role in Children's Development	53
Section II	The Background	55
Chapter 5	Budget: Where Does the Money Go?	56
	Why Budgets?	56

	Where Do You Start?	57
	Types of Budgets	57
	The Start-Up Budget	57
	The Annual Operating Budget	58
	Income	58
	Fixed Cost: Personnel	59
	Space Cost	60
	Controllable Expenses	61
	Using the Computer for Budget Planning	61
	Budget Analysis and Control	61
	Keeping Budget Records	62
Chapter 6	Planning: How To Have a Really Good Day	65
	Why Do I Need to Plan?	65
	Who Should Be Involved in Planning?	66
	What Should Be Included?	67
	Putting It All Together	69
	Independent Projects	69
	Group Activities	71
	Interest Centers	71
	Field Trips	71
	Clubs	73
	Spontaneous Activities	73
	Community Activities	74
	Making a Schedule	75
Chapter 7	Environment: Making Space the Best It Can Be	78
	Which Comes First, Program or Physical Facility?	78
	Overall Design of Indoor Space	80
	What Should Be Included?	81
	When You Have to Share Indoor Space	83
	Overall Design of Outdoor Space	84
	What Should Be Included?	85
	When You Have to Share Outdoor Space	87
Section III	The Curriculum	90
Chapter 8	Games and Other Fun Things to Do	91
	Why Games?	91
	Games and Safety	92
	Outdoor Games	93
	Activities	93
	Active Games that Can Be Played Indoors	96
	Activities	97
	Indoor Games	99
	Activities	99
	Guidelines for Having Fun With Games	102
Chapter 9	Imagination and the Arts	106
	Role of the Arts	106
	Visual Arts	108

	Activities	108
	Equipment to Have Available	111
	Music and Movement	112
	Activities	113
	Equipment to Have Available	114
	Drama	115
	Activities	116
	Equipment to Have Available	118
Chapter 10	The Earth Around Us, the Sky Above Us	121
	Science in After-School Care	121
	Activities	122
	Equipment to Have Available	126
	Math in Child Care	127
	Activities	127
	Equipment to Have Available	129
	Are You Afraid of Science?	129
	Suggestions For Caregivers	130
Chapter 11	Growing Up	134
	Into the Future	134
	Exploring the Options	136
	Activities	136
	Equipment to Have Available	141
	Guidelines for Teachers and Caregivers	142
Chapter 12	Getting Fit, Staying Fit	146
	How Healthy Are Our Kids?	146
	Activities	148
	Equipment to Have Available	152
	Getting Fit, Staying Fit	153
	Activities	154
	Equipment to Have Available	156
	Suggestions for Caregivers	157
Chapter 13	Guiding Behavior	161
	Moral Thinking	161
	Self-Esteem and Behavior	164
	Conflict Resolution	166
	Strategies	167
	Activities	167
	Self-Esteem	168
	Activities	170
	Cooperation	171
	Activities	172
	Behaviors that Create Problems for the Individual or the Group	173
	The Aggressive Child	173
	The Withdrawn Child	173
	The Overly Active Child	174

Section IV	The Community	178
Chapter 14	Using Community Resources	179
	Why Include the Community?	179
	Bringing the Community to Your Center	180
	Intergenerational Programs	180
	Activities for Seniors and Children	181
	Activities Using Teenage Volunteers	185
	Community Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses	186
	Guidelines for Using Volunteers	188
	Removing Barriers to Community Participation	189
Chapter 15	Continuing Debates	193
	What Is Quality Child Care?	194
	Who Should Pay the High Cost of Quality Child Care?	195
	How Much Should Parents Be Included in Decisions About Their Children?	197
	What Should Be Included in a Child-Care Curriculum?	199
	War and Violence	200
	Drugs and Alcohol Abuse	202
	Index	207

Section



The People in Child Care

1

Child-Care Problems and Solutions

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Discuss the need for school-age child care.
- Describe programs for school-age children.
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of each type of child care.
- Discuss child care in several countries.

My friends are all at the mall. I have to stay home and take care of my little brother. Sometimes I just wish I could run away. Julie, age fifteen

A Pressing Need for After-School Care

"Childhood has changed" begins a column on the front page of the Los Angeles Times on Mother's Day, 1991. The article points out that the changes are not just superficial, but far-reaching. The family unit is no longer stable. Parents get divorced, then remarry. Women who do not remarry carry on with both jobs and child rearing. More than 50 percent of children under the age of six have mothers who work. Nearly the same number of children from kindergarten through third grade are left alone to care for themselves part of the time. Who should care for all these children?

Historically, governments and community organizations have responded to a need for child care. During World War II child-care centers were established for preschoolers whose mothers worked in defense-related industries. After the war ended, many of these centers continued to be funded and are now a permanent part of the child-care scene. During the 1960's concern over children who were failing in elementary school prompted the establishment of Head Start Programs. Again, however, the focus was on preschoolers. As the number of working mothers increased in the 1970's and 1980's, attention shifted to the needs of infants and

toddlers. Currently, the urgent need for places for school-age children is beginning to receive national consideration as their numbers multiply. It has been predicted that soon 34 million school-age children will need child care. Only about half that number of infants and preschoolers will require care.

The majority of older children are left to care for themselves. These self-care children are alone after their parents leave for work. They get themselves, and sometimes their siblings, ready for school. They are the same children who let themselves into an empty house at the end of the day where they stay alone until one of their parents arrives home.

However, there is divided opinion on the effects of self-care. One study showed that young self-care black children had more fears and nightmares than nonlatchkey children (Long & Long, 1981). Some child specialists fear that children who are alone may experiment more with drugs, alcohol, and sex. Studies are beginning to substantiate that fear. On the other hand, other researchers have found just the opposite. A group of white self-care school-age children in a middle-class suburb were no different than nonself-care children (Van Dell & Corasanti, 1985). One researcher even found that some children take on responsibilities willingly and feel more competent (Lamb, 1982). Whether they are frightened or challenged, these children are missing out on some of the joys of childhood. They often are isolated inside their home and they have to grow up too fast. Although saddened, their parents feel there are no alternatives.

Children bear the burden of a society that has not caught up with changes that are taking place. Parents already know the problems of finding a safe place for their children. Child-care openings are hard to find or are prohibitively expensive. The quality of some programs is low. Classroom teachers and principals also recognize the need. They see children who arrive long before classes start and linger on the playground after school. Even the general public may be aware of the problem. Nearly everyone has seen kids on street corners with nothing to do and nowhere to go. These youngsters often commit acts of vandalism or petty crimes. The demand for a safe place for children is clear. The harder question to answer is how to provide it.

Who Provides Child Care?

In any community there will be a variety of child-care options. These range from care in the home to recreational programs and organized child care.

In-Home Care

A few parents can afford to hire someone to care for their children in their own home. The terms *nanny* or *au pair* have appeared in current media. These can be trained persons who understand children and who can offer quality care. For many children, this is an ideal arrangement because they can walk to and from school. They can maintain friendships in their neighborhood. They can choose



Figure 1-1 This child takes care of herself until her mom and dad get home from work.

how to spend their time: read, watch television, or visit with friends. They can be at home when they are ill.

Another type of in-home care is provided by a housekeeper. She may have been hired to clean the house, but cares for the children when they come home after school. In situations where this person does not speak English, housekeeper and children may have difficulty communicating with each other. However, there is also an opportunity for each of them to learn the other's language.

Even more frequently, in-home child care is provided by older siblings. Children as young as nine or ten care for five-year-olds. Teenagers may be in charge of several younger brothers and sisters. This kind of arrangement offers children the security of their own familiar surroundings. However, it puts unnecessary burdens on the older child and may place severe restrictions on the younger children.