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*Fifth Edition*

*Planning  
and  
Administering  
Early  
Childhood  
Programs*



*Celia Anita Decker   John R. Decker*

# Planning and Administering Early Childhood Programs

## Fifth Edition

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Merrill, an imprint of  
Macmillan Publishing Company  
*New York*

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
*Toronto*

Maxwell Macmillan International  
*New York Oxford Singapore Sydney*

**To Kelcey and Keith, our twin sons, and Kristiana, our daughter, who have helped with the clerical and computer aspects of the writing of this book.**

Cover photo copyright © David Young-Wolff, PhotoEdit  
Editor: Linda A. Sullivan  
Production Editor: Constantina Geldis  
Production Buyer: Pamela D. Bennett

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Printed in the United States of America

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Macmillan Publishing Company  
113 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Decker, Celia Anita.

Planning and administering early childhood programs / Celia Anita  
Decker, John R. Decker.—5th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-02-327965-6

1. Early childhood education—United States. 2. Educational  
planning—United States. 3. Day care centers—United States—  
Administration. 4. Instructional systems—United States—

I. Decker, John R. II. Title.

LB1139.25.D43 1992

372.21'0973—dc20

91-20961

Printing:

5 6 7 8 9 Year:

5



# Preface

*Planning and Administering Early Childhood Programs, Fifth Edition*, is built on the conviction that thoughtful planning and administration are essential to the success of early childhood programs. Our main priority is to present the rationale for this thoughtful planning and administration. The more administrators know about factors influencing quality programs, the better equipped they will be to plan and administer programs. From our perspective, each child, parent, staff member, and sponsor deserves nothing less.

We know how important planning is. So we are committed to helping new and experienced administrators and students of administration make sense of what they are doing.

The text is organized to suggest how early childhood administrators must structure their thinking as they make decisions about their local programs. Thus, following a brief overview of the current status of early childhood education, the text is divided into three sections. Part I is concerned with the framework for program planning such as choosing the program rationale and abiding by regulatory constraints. Part II is focused on the operational aspects of the program, the more purely administrative component. Staffing, housing, equipping, and financing decisions must stem from the selected program rationale. Part III is centered on the program's services. Services for children involve: planning for their activities; meeting their nutritional, health, and safety needs; and assessing, recording, and reporting their progress. Services for parents include: involvement through communication between staff and parents and through parent participation; and provisions for parent education and family resource and

support programs. Each program service for children and parents must mirror the selected program rationale. And finally, to be truly professional, administrators must contribute to their own profession in direct ways.

## NEW FEATURES

The fifth edition of the text reflects a balanced concern for all types of early childhood programs with their varying purposes, sponsorships, and ages of children. Early childhood is becoming a more broadly based field and this text reflects that outlook on early education and child care aspects.

The perspective of this new edition is that administrative decision making must be based on a chosen psycho-philosophical position. Several of these positions are discussed. Because the diversity of views has been reduced to two basic program orientations, these views are the focus of the book: (1) to nurture the total development of the young child (i.e., primarily the interactionist position), and (2) to help the child master cultural literacy demands (i.e., primarily the behavioral-environmental position). Throughout the text there are discussions on how a chosen psycho-philosophical view affects decisions in all areas of program planning.

There are two major focuses of this new edition. First, there is a focus on the growing need for affordable, quality early childhood programs for children from infancy through the primary grades (levels). Thus, the new edition has an expanded emphasis on infant/toddler programs, primary grade (level) programs, and school-age child care programs. Second, there is a focus on the professional concern over the heavy academic emphasis which led to various position statements by professional associations. The reasons for the call for "appropriate practices" are explained in Chapter 2 and developed throughout the text.

This fifth edition also offers the following new features:

1. Examples of inside and outside arrangements and equipment needed for infant/toddler programs, primary-age programs, and school-age child care programs in addition to the housing and equipping needs for programs serving three- through five-year-old children.
2. Broad outlines of "appropriate" curriculum practices for the entire range of children's programs.
3. A more comprehensive treatment of informal methods of assessment.

All text and resource information has been thoroughly updated. The "Notes" and "For Further Reading" sections at the end of each chapter also refer to the most current information.

## PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

Readers will find the three subdivisions of the book helpful, because these parallel the planning processes of an administrator—namely, deciding on the

program's framework, operationalizing the program, and implementing the children's program. The summaries of each chapter will also help readers focus on the main themes of the book.

We have raised issues to stimulate early childhood leaders to reexamine their own beliefs and then take another look at their program's rationale and practices. Thus, relevant studies are included throughout. Cookbook formulas are omitted and options are given, because single solutions are obviously not appropriate for everyone.

The text provides information needed by all early childhood programs. The field is diverse, but there is a great deal of overlap of the types of competencies needed in various programs. We have attempted to provide a balance among research and supported statements, applied ideas for implementation, and resources for further thought and consideration.

Like the four before it, this edition will aid in initial planning of early childhood programs and be a source of helpful information after programs are under way. The purpose of this book will be fulfilled when the reader makes wiser judgments about planning and administering early childhood programs.

We thank the following reviewers of this edition for their helpful comments: Patricia Bence, Tompkins Cortland Community College (Dryden, NY); Kim Madsen, Chadron State College (NE); and Beverly Schumer, Mercy College of Detroit.

*Celia A. Decker*  
*John R. Decker*



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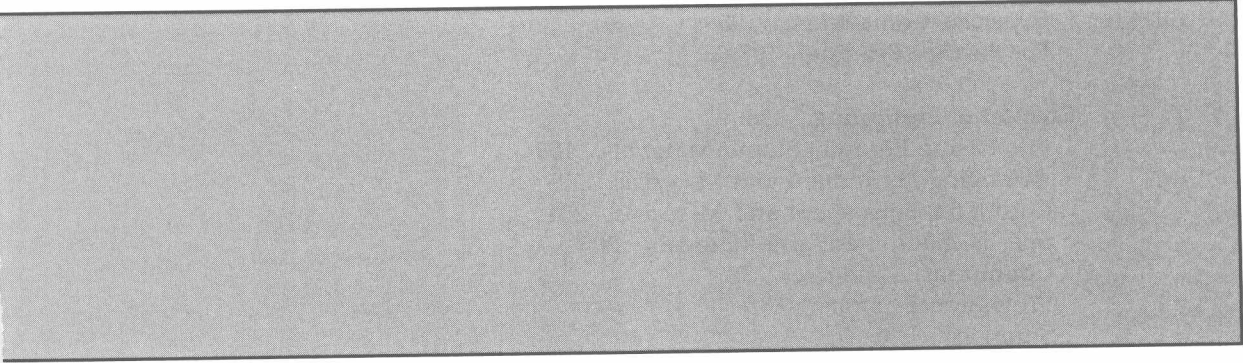
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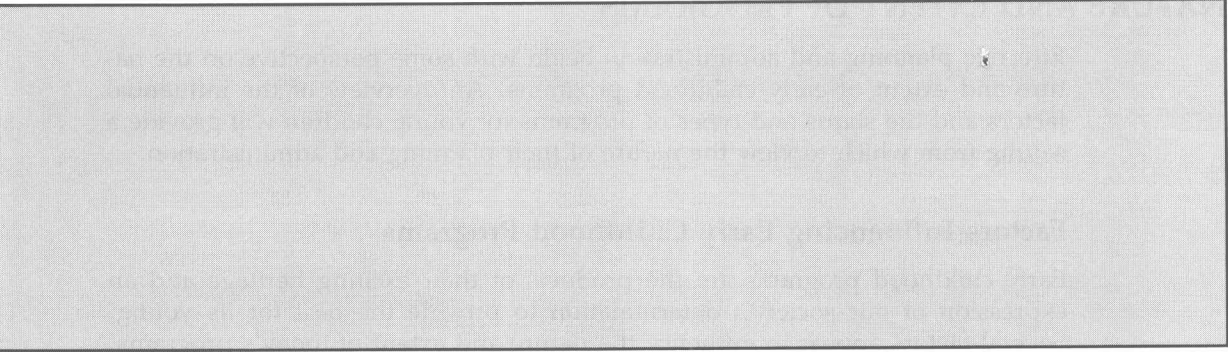
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**T**he momentum for early childhood programs has been building for the last two decades and shows no signs of abatement. Among the extensive and varied programs concerned with the total development of human potential, early childhood programs are in the forefront. Demographic data detail an ever-increasing need for high-quality early childhood programs. Professionals agree on many factors that make for effective programs, and research extols the benefits of high-quality programs and the damaging effects of poor ones. The importance of high-quality early childhood programs to families has resulted in a ripening awareness in political and economic circles. This growing political and economic will is seen in the numerous child- and family-related bills recently introduced in Congress and state legislatures,<sup>1</sup> the National Governors' Association reports on children,<sup>2</sup> and activity of the business-led Committee for Economic Development.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the obvious need for high-quality early childhood programs, the empirically based rationale for planning programs, the promising data confirming such programs' benefits for young children and their families, and the seeds of political and economic support, complex challenges lie ahead. As an unprecedented number of groups and individuals in both the public and private sectors set off to implement programs for our young children, the need for adequate planning and administration seems self-evident; yet, judging by the frequent absence of a rational, conceptual, and systematic approach, planning and administration are often considered irrelevant to program quality. Careful attention to planning and administration can prevent costly, frivolous, and counter-productive mistakes and can protect program growth in the face of far-outstretched resources, so that program quality is maintained and enhanced.

## NATURE AND EXTENT OF PROGRAMS

Effective planning and administration begin with some perspective on the nature and extent of early childhood programs. An overview of the influential factors and the status and types of programs for young children will provide a setting from which to view the nature of their planning and administration.

### Factors Influencing Early Childhood Programs

Early childhood programs are the products of their exciting heritage and an expression of our society's determination to provide the best for its young. Several factors appear to influence the nature and extent of today's programs. First, literature reveals a growing conviction that a child's early years are highly important to the remainder of development. Because of evidence that early life experiences, including those of the newborn, influence later development, the quality of early childhood experiences is believed to determine, to a large extent, how effective later development can be. Consequently, programs designed to meet the needs of young children are receiving high priority.

Further, there have been major changes in the ecology of childhood. There is more divorce, more single-parent families, fewer extended families, and more teenage parents. Zimiles calls these changes in family life style the **diminishing mothers** factor.<sup>4</sup> Today, one in five of all children living in the United States lives with a single parent, and by the year 2000, one in four will live with a single parent. Over half of all births are to teenagers, and four out of five of these mothers are unmarried. Over a quarter of a million children are living apart from their families in foster care and institutional settings.<sup>5</sup> The number of poor children under six years of age increased by 35 percent between 1968 and 1987. The 23 percent poverty rate for children under six years of age is more than double the rate for children six to eighteen years of age. Almost half of these children live in urban areas, and the remaining numbers are almost equally divided between suburban and rural areas. The largest group of poor children is white (42 percent), but minority children have a much higher likelihood of living in poverty (48 percent of black children live in poverty, 42 percent of Hispanic, 29 percent of other minorities, and 13 percent of white children excluding Hispanic).<sup>6</sup> These social and demographic trends are likely to continue and even rise, partially because of popular beliefs about children and families in poverty that impede more adequate social policies.<sup>7</sup>

More and more children need care in productive group environments while their mothers work. Over half of all preschool children have mothers in the work force, and by the year 2000, 70 percent of all preschool children will have working mothers. Only 30 percent of employed mothers work part-time (33 percent of married mothers and 26 percent of unmarried mothers).<sup>8</sup> And the largest increase in employed mothers in the last decade is in the proportion of children under age one with mothers in the work force.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, against the background of today's social problems, early childhood programs are seen as support systems for families. In some ways, these pro-

grams have come full circle. They are seen today as they were seen under the leadership of Jean Oberlin, Friedrich Froebel, Elizabeth Peabody, Susan E. Blow, Kate Wiggin, Patty S. Hill, Maria Montessori, and Rachel and Margaret McMillan, as the best hope of reducing poverty of mind and body.

Even today's advantaged families often feel inadequate in trying to meet the demands of our rapidly changing society. Thus, universally available early childhood programs are now considered worthwhile to provide an essential service to families and an enriched, productive environment for young children.

### **Status of Early Childhood Programs**

Early childhood programs come in all sizes, shapes, and philosophies, and, like most things, with various degrees of excellence. Young children and early childhood programs are big business from almost every standpoint. Early childhood programs, which came into their own about thirty years ago, are no longer the additional service of a more affluent public school system, the special project of a philanthropic organization, an undertaking of a state welfare agency, or the result of a federal program. Currently, all states provide moneys for universal public school kindergartens; since 1980, there has been a movement for public education of economically disadvantaged four-year-olds. More and more children from infants to school age are in day-care programs—the federal government funds projects such as Head Start; corporations operate early childhood programs; and resource and referral centers provide needed services.

Universities are bombarding the scholarly market with research about young children and their programs, producing professionals and paraprofessionals for child service programs. Programs have encouraged a burgeoning commercial market for educational toys, equipment, and books.

Although early childhood programs have greatly expanded, the body of data for the whole field is incomplete.<sup>10</sup> Figures inadequately reflect care by relatives, children in multiple care arrangements, and school-age child care. Several trends are evident, however. Universal education for all five-year-olds is, for all practical purposes, a reality. On the other hand, infant/toddler and school-age child care are very scarce. Programs for children in low-income families are expanding with Head Start enrollments and public school programs for pre-kindergarten at-risk children (especially four-year-olds). However, this expansion lags further and further behind the growing numbers of poor children in the United States.

## **TYPES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**

One of the first problems encountered in attempts to differentiate among the various types of early childhood programs was that the term **early childhood** was not precisely defined. Educators, child psychologists, and others used vague synonyms or different chronological ages or developmental milestones.



The National Association for the Education of Young Children defines early childhood as birth through age eight.

One simple classification of early childhood programs is by their source of funding. Generally, early childhood programs are under the jurisdiction of one of the following: (1) public schools (e.g., kindergartens); (2) private control (e.g., nurseries, kindergartens, parent cooperatives, business-operated day-care programs, and programs for young children sponsored by churches, service organizations, and charities); (3) federal programs (e.g., Head Start and Parent and Child Center Program); (4) national private agency programs (e.g., American Montessori schools); and (5) university laboratory programs (e.g., nursery, kindergarten, and primary-level schools). Closely paralleling the sources of funding are the legal forms of organization: proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and public agencies. (For details on these legal forms of organizations, see Chapter 3.)

Early childhood programs may also be described according to their origin. The following types can be historically traced: day-care, Head Start and Follow Through, kindergartens, Montessori schools, nursery schools, and primary schools.

## Day-Care

The term **day-care** generally refers to programs that operate for extended hours (often twelve hours) and offer services for children from birth through school age. Most programs for young children are of the day-care type because they involve the care and education of children separated from their parents for all or part of the day. The exception to this is the night-care program.

The forerunners of day-care centers in the United States were the Infant Schools of Europe. Although these schools were conducted by social reformers in an attempt to help the poor, educators in the United States saw them as important for all young children. These Infant Schools, based on the writing of Comenius, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi, hoped to take advantage of the fact that young children learn rapidly and retain easily, to develop character, and to lay the foundation for good mental health.<sup>11</sup>

Medical discoveries of the mid-1800s aroused greater concern for children's sanitation and health. In 1854, a Nursery School for Children of Poor Women was established in cooperation with the Child's Hospital of New York City. It was patterned after the 1844 French *crèche*, which was designed as day-care for working French women and as a method of reducing infant mortality rates. Concern for physical well-being soon broadened to include concern for habits, manners, and vocational skills.<sup>12</sup>

As immigrants settled in urban areas, settlement-house day nurseries opened (e.g., Hull House nursery in 1898). These day nurseries were considered necessary to counter many social evils (such as the exploitation of women and children in the labor force) and to help alleviate immigrants' cultural assimilation problems. Education was deemed essential for true social reform. Thus, some

day nurseries added kindergartens, and some were sponsored by boards of education and opened in public schools (e.g., Los Angeles). Parent education became a component of the day nursery's educational program. Parents were taught various household skills and management, and the care of children.<sup>13</sup>

In time, however, some social reformers began to feel the day nurseries might supplant the role of the family in child rearing. Consequently, emphasis was placed on the importance of mothering (i.e., nurturing), and mothers were encouraged to remain in the home. In order to help mothers "afford" to stay in the home, the Mother's Pension Act was enacted in 1911. Enthusiasm for day nurseries further declined when the National Federation of Day Nurseries drew attention to the poor quality of some programs. Concern over the appropriateness of day nurseries stimulated the development of nursery schools in the 1920s.<sup>14</sup> (The history of nursery schools is discussed later in this chapter.)

Day nurseries regained their status during the Depression, when the government for the first time subsidized all-day programs in order to aid children and unemployed school teachers. Although they were called Works Progress Administration (WPA) nursery schools, they are included here because of their all-day schedule. Early childhood nursery school educators associated with the National Association of Nursery Education, the Association for Childhood Education, and the National Council on Parent Aid formed an advisory committee to assist in supervising and training teachers for WPA nursery schools and in developing guides and records.<sup>15</sup>

Federal funds for all-day child care were again provided in 1942 by P.L. 137 (the Lanham, or Community Facilities, Act). The purpose of the funds was to provide for the child's physical needs, and nursery school educators again assisted. Outstanding examples of such centers were the two Child Service Centers established by Kaiser Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland, Oregon, and directed by Lois Meek Stolz and James L. Hymes, Jr.<sup>16</sup> These centers also provided such support services as precooked meals for parents and children, on-site grocery stores, and clothes mending, to ease the burden of working parents. Support ended with termination of the Act in 1946. During the Korean War, appropriation of funds under the Defense Housing and Community Facilities and Services Act (1951) was negligible.<sup>17</sup>

The Economic Opportunity Act (1964) funded Head Start, day-care services for migrant workers, and day-care for children whose parents were involved in the various manpower projects. The Housing and Urban Development Act, Title VII (1965), The Model Cities Act (1966), and the Parent and Child Centers (funded with Head Start moneys) also assisted the day-care efforts.

In the 1980s, federal funds for various types of day-care programs decreased. Today, government support for day-care is seen in The Child Care and Dependent Care Tax Credit begun in 1975–76 and expanded in 1982–83, and in the Title XX Social Services Block Grant, which provides funds to states to cover a wide range of social services. Thus day-care has shifted back to state and local control for the most part. For primary child care, about half of all children are cared for by relatives and the other half are almost equally split between center