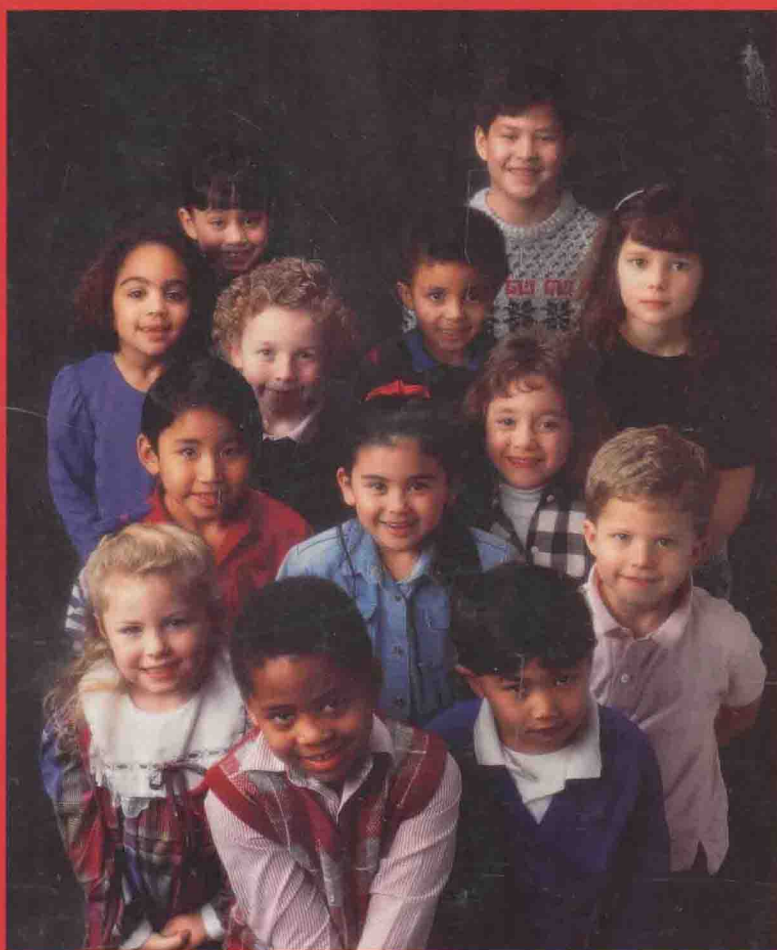


# THE INTEGRATED CLASSROOM

The Assessment-Curriculum Link  
in Early Childhood Education



➤ Sue C. Wortham

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*To Marshal Wortham, my husband*



# Preface

The field of early childhood education is dynamic and is constantly evolving. There are many types of early childhood programs. However, all share commonalities. One commonality is that all are seeking to improve the developmental and learning experiences that are provided for young children. Another commonality is that all programs are seeking to improve how they address the group and individual needs of the young children that they serve. A reality in most types of programs and settings is that the children who are enrolled can be very diverse. The diversity can be developmental, cultural, linguistic, and in ability. In addition, children with disabilities or who are at risk for developing a disability or difficulty may also be members of the class.

This book was written to help teachers of young children prepare for diversity in their students. It was developed as a result of the concerns early childhood teachers have expressed about the needs of young children who enter preschool and primary classrooms. As children with disabilities are included into all types of early childhood classrooms, teachers and future teachers are becoming aware that they must broaden their knowledge base about similarities and differences in children and about ways to prepare quality programs for all children.

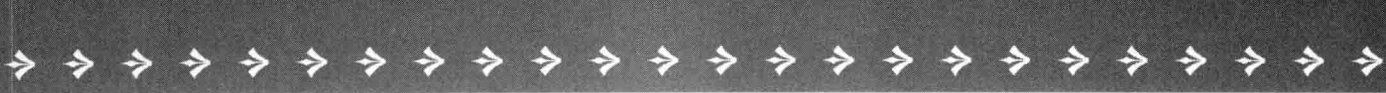
Another element in the decisions made as to the content of this text was the need to address how to determine the development, abilities, and needs of individual children who might be present in the program. It was thought to be necessary to establish the link between the evaluation of young children through assessment with the experiences that would be provided for them in the early childhood classroom. In addition, because the fields of early childhood education and early childhood special education have functioned somewhat separately in the past, it seemed important to discuss topics in linking assessment and curriculum in terms of the diversity in young children. In other words, another link was established between how to serve children with diverse abilities and backgrounds within the classroom that also serves children with more average abilities.

This text, then, is about integration: the integration of all types of children in the early childhood classroom; the integration of assessment and learning as an interactive process; and the integration of curriculum and instruction to be age appropriate, group appropriate, and individually appropriate. It is hoped that students using it will find information that will help them make connections between how children's development and backgrounds are both similar and different and how the early childhood teacher can prepare to work with each one individually and with a group of young children as a whole.

I am indebted to many people for the conceptualization and development of this text. The first ideas and planning came from conversations with John Cryan of the University of Toledo. Although he was unable to serve as coauthor, his perceptions and input were invaluable. Graduate students in various classes added needed information and ideas as did teachers in early childhood classrooms in the San Antonio area. My colleagues at the University of Texas at San Antonio were a source of resources and suggestions. I especially want to thank Suzanne Winter, Anthony Van Reusen, and David Katims for their help. Barbara Gilstad used an early draft in her class to try out the information with undergraduate students, and other colleagues have offered encouragement.

I also want to thank my editors, Linda Sullivan and Ann Davis, who were both patient and supportive. Reviewers provided important insights and suggestions. I am indebted to the following: John Chesky, Montreat-Anderson College; Suzanne E. Cortez, Northern Kentucky University; Robert G. Harrington, University of Kansas; Peggy Perkins, University of Nevada-Las Vegas; and Phil Wishon, University of Northern Colorado.

*Sue C. Wortham*



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# The Integrated Classroom

*The Assessment-Curriculum Link in  
Early Childhood Education*

Sue C. Wortham

*University of Texas at San Antonio*



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# ➤ 1

## Introduction





## ➔ Chapter Objectives

As a result of reading this chapter, you will be able to

1. Describe the variety of early childhood programs
2. List key characteristics of diversity in young children who attend early childhood programs
3. Explain the role of screening and assessment in developing educational programs for young children
4. Discuss issues concerning the use of standardized measurement instruments with young children
5. Describe the relationship between screening, assessment, and planning instruction for individual children and groups of children
6. Explain the role of federal regulations in screening and assessment

## OVERVIEW OF CURRENT TRENDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

This book is about educational programs for children in the early childhood years. It is written for students who are preparing to teach in early childhood programs, as well as for teachers who are currently working with young children in various kinds of programs. The book focuses on how to develop quality programs for the diversity of children who attend early childhood classrooms—whether the classrooms be in public schools, private schools, Head Start centers, child care or child development centers, or children's hospitals. The children in such programs are a diverse population, including children with cultural or linguistic diversity and those with disabilities. All these children may be served within an **integrated classroom**.

A major concern at the present time is to provide programs that are suitable for young children. In the 1980s, early childhood classrooms from preschool through third grade were becoming more and more academic in focus to respond to measures for school reform designed to raise achievement. Teaching practices became more directed toward increasing scores on standardized achievement tests than on providing the best programming for young children. As a result, many children were not succeeding in their first years of schooling. The publication of *Developmentally*



*Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8* (Bredenkamp, 1987) marked a turning point; subsequently, teaching practices were revised to be more suited to young children's level of development. As a result of the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices provided in that publication, there have been national efforts to develop quality programs for young children in all types of early childhood settings.

Congruent with this concern is the reality that there is a widening diversity in young children who attend early childhood programs. To meet the diversity, there has been an expansion in programs that provide varied services to children and families. In the effort to develop quality programs, early childhood educators must address the issues of development in young children and variations in development among individual children. The more diverse the children are, the more essential it is to know as much as possible about each child's developmental status so that instructional planning is suitable for the age of the child, as well as the needs of the individual child.

As children with extreme differences in development are integrated into early childhood classrooms, a new issue related to appropriate practices has emerged. The strategies used with young children with disabilities address their learning needs, which are somewhat different than those of children of more average ability. Children with mental retardation or behavior disorders require repetition of learning activities and focus on skill development, which may not be needed by all children. Teacher-structured and teacher-directed activities are used to provide children with disabilities with the repeated experiences using the skills that they need for daily functioning and learning.

As all kinds of populations are integrated into early childhood classrooms, the diversity in children must be accommodated. Early childhood educators must reevaluate what quality programming that is "developmentally appropriate" means in reality. Developmentally appropriate practices are constructivist in philosophy, based on the theory of development first proposed by Jean Piaget (1952). On the other hand, with children who need repetition and support in their learning efforts, instruction that is structured with the use of teacher-directed strategies supported with positive reinforcement has been used. This type of instruction has been identified with B. F. Skinner's (1972) theory of learning. The principles of developmentally appropriate practices have been founded on child-centered and child-initiated learning—a model that is based on the child's active interaction with the world. These principles have encouraged teachers to permit children to take a more active and responsible role in their own learning. In contrast, the practices used with children with disabilities have focused on adult-planned and adult-implemented intervention activities designed for individual children.

It is this author's position that we must broaden our vision of developmentally appropriate practices to include how best to serve all young children—including those with extremes in development. We must not view one or the other theoretical approach as the only appropriate one; instead we should evaluate how and when each should be used within a quality program. This is a complex task, but it is the reality that awaits future teachers. Throughout this book, we will be discussing the role of theories in curriculum and instruction for young children. We will also be