

# GUIDING YOUNG CHILDREN'S LEARNING

*Sara Wynn Lundsteen*  
*Norma Bernstein Tarrow*

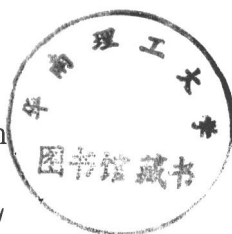


# GUIDING YOUNG CHILDREN'S LEARNING

A Comprehensive Approach to  
Early Childhood Education

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To my parents and Alex  
S. W. L.

To my mother and the memory of my father  
N. B. T.

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## PREFACE

We begin the first chapter of *Guiding Young Children's Learning* with a scene in the office of a faculty member at a school of education. Three students—Pat, Chris, and Lee—are charting their careers and seeking an understanding of the field of early childhood education. This setting provides the starting place for our exploration of that dynamic and rapidly changing field. We have written this textbook for students who, like Pat, Chris, and Lee, are beginning their study of early childhood and hoping to become early childhood educators—but we have also tried to meet the demands of this endlessly fascinating area in such a way that our text will be useful as a continuing reference for practicing teachers and caretakers of young children.

Our text covers early childhood from infancy through the primary grades—a span of ages which is, as far as we know, unique in this field. It is true that the largest number of our readers will work with children aged four, five, and six, but we have included material about the entire range in each chapter. We have also included not only “typical” children but also the gifted, the handicapped, the disadvantaged, and the culturally different; and we go beyond the school and its staff to discuss the involvement of parents and the community. We believe that we have covered many topics which are given little or no treatment in other current texts.

Naturally, each of our readers has different needs and perceptions. We have tried to meet common needs; but we have also preserved the integrity of our own point of view. Our orientation is developmental-



interactionist, and we emphasize creative problem solving by young children and respect by teachers for each child as a developing, autonomous learner—a “whole child,” moving, feeling, and thinking creatively.

This text consists of four parts. Part One provides background: it examines the history of early childhood education, the current “state of the art,” and possible future careers for our readers. The scenes enacted in Chapter 1 give a sampling of several different types of early childhood programs and also foreshadow many ideas to be developed later in the book. Chapter 2 is a brief presentation of the roots of our profession and some present international influences and perspectives. Chapter 3 brings the readers up to date, discussing trends since the renaissance of early childhood education in the United States in the mid-1960s. A continuum of programs is presented.

Part Two covers the development of the child. We believe that an understanding of child development is essential to anyone concerned with planning educational experiences for children. The chapters in Part Two suggest directions for educators, help establish a theoretical base for education, and present a point of view based largely on developmental research. As developmental-interactionists, we believe that curriculum planning must grow from and interact with knowledge of developmental principles. Although, as we noted above, our interest is in the “whole child,” we have found it necessary in Part Two to discuss each developmental domain—cognitive, affective, and motor—independently. Chapter 4 describes development in terms of physical growth and motor and perceptual development. Chapter 5 describes development in cognition and language; we have treated these two areas together in order to stress their interrelationship, a point that is rarely emphasized in the literature of this field. Chapter 6 deals with the affective domain—social and emotional development. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the developmental assessment of children and programs, and also a related topic—the assessment and accountability of teachers.

Part Three deals with curriculum designed to promote cognitive, affective, and psycho-physical-motor abilities. The chapters on development in Part Two have counterparts in Part Three: Chapter 4 corresponds to Chapter 8; Chapter 5 to Chapters 9 and 10; and Chapter 6 to Chapter 11. Examples have been drawn from important content areas. We should point out that by “curriculum” we mean far more than separate subject areas (mathematics, reading, social studies) for children in the primary grades or block play, story time, and dramatic play for toddlers and preschoolers. Our *examples* are simply that: we do not intend to let subject areas be overemphasized. Part Three, then, presents goals and *illustrative* curriculum areas related to the discussions of development in Part Two. Chapter 8 takes up curriculum for the psycho-physical-motor area, stressing the informal aspects of developing per-

ceptual and motor skills and movement education but mentioning specific school programs in these fields. This chapter also examines nutrition, health, and safety. As we mentioned above, both Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 relate to Chapter 5, on development of thought and language. Chapter 9 is concerned with goals and curriculum for cognitive development beginning in the earliest years; here we use examples from mathematics and science. New “process approaches” to science and experiences with numbers are emphasized; this is in tune with Piaget’s ideas and with recent research. Chapter 10 presents goals, curriculum, and sample activities in the area of language development. The first part of Chapter 10 covers the informal aspects of developing oral language; the second part takes up reading and writing readiness and approaches to beginning reading. We discuss literature for young children and how Piaget’s ideas are applicable to reading readiness. Chapter 11 deals with curriculum in the affective area. Informal curriculum in this area is concerned with developing a healthy self-concept and personality, sound value systems, and good social relationships. The affective curriculum can extend to almost all fields; we have taken our examples from social studies, music, and art.

Part Four takes up the special strategies teachers will need. Chapter 12 deals with teaching and learning strategies; here we discuss the importance of children’s symbolic play and problem solving. Our emphasis on problem solving is another aspect of this text which we believe to be unique; and we have carried it through much of the book. Chapter 13 is concerned with the needs of special children—those who are environmentally, educationally, or physically different from the norm. Chapter 14 discusses how environment, or structure, and materials can be designed and used to create a special world for children. Here we view planning, management, and discipline as going hand in hand with artistry. Chapter 15 discusses the relationship of the school setting to parents and the community.

Following Part Four is the Epilogue, in which our students Chris, Pat, and Lee reappear. Here we recapitulate some important themes and issues and look briefly to the future.

It is our hope that each of our readers will find a place in this field, as Chris, Pat, and Lee do. Teachers, like children, learn and discover from the inside out. But in learning, everyone needs a point of view, a theoretical base, and exposure to the thoughts of others. It is these things which we have attempted to provide.

Many of our readers will, we hope, be interested in our accompanying activities book, *Activities and Resources for Guiding Young Children’s Learning* (McGraw-Hill, 1981), which relates developmental knowledge specifically to the curriculum. Here we present objectives, activities, and resources for various developmental and curriculum areas; in essence,



this accompanying book serves as an extension of the theories and implications presented in the text.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this book, we have received very important contributions from several early childhood educators: from Jill Bardwell and James L. Hoot for Chapter 1; from Velma Schmidt for Chapter 2; from Patricia Kimberly Webb for Chapter 6; from Jan Fish for Chapter 7; from Katheryn Sampeck for Chapter 11; from Norma C. McGeoch and Ellen Steadman for Chapter 13; from Rose Spicola for Chapter 14; and from Paulette Fuller and Gloria Transits for Chapter 15. We are very grateful to them for their work on these chapters; but we must point out to our readers that the responsibility for any mistakes or shortcomings is ours alone.

In addition, we are indebted to hundreds of students, teachers, colleagues, consultants, administrators, and young children who have stimulated us. Special thanks are due to Carol Mason Wolfe, who, as Sara Lundsteen's research assistant, read and weighed every word again and again, providing a fresh interdisciplinary view and an incisive yet humanistic approach; to Linda Varvas, Norma Bernstein Tarrow's assistant, who performed many clerical tasks and did much reading and criticism of the manuscript; to Alex Lundsteen, who provided the continuing support and encouragement essential to long-term projects; and to Irv Howard and Arthur, Marc, and Jonathan Bernstein, for their patience, their understanding, and their tolerance of the time and efforts devoted to this project. Another expression of gratitude goes to our production editor Susan Gamer for her remarkable patience, care, and persistence in helping to shape the emergence of this book in its final form. Our focus on creative problem solving as a central theme owes much to cross-cultural research and testing in Swedish kindergartens. This project was directed by Göran Stromqvist and included the following teachers in Gothenberg, Sweden: Anna-Lena Lundstrom, Kerstin Swenson, Katarina Wahl, and Lisbeth Watson. We also express our thanks to the American kindergarten project: to Ann Kieschnick, principal; Benna Jones, teacher; and the children and parents at Gooch Early Childhood Center in Dallas Independent School District. Finally, we must include Burr and Meese, who supervised our creation of large portions of this book.

*Sara Wynn Lundsteen  
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## PART ONE

# EARLY CHILDHOOD— PAST, PRESENT, AND YOUR FUTURE

*The first part of this book contains three chapters exploring present settings in early childhood education, kinds of jobs you might find, and perspectives from distant history up to the present.*

*Chapter 1 gives you as vivid an image as we could conjure of present exemplary settings for early childhood education. You will get to know our students—Pat, Chris, and Lee—and experience principles of early childhood education pulled from their whirlwind tour of some settings, principles you will meet again in subsequent chapters and in your own teaching. Their experiences move you easily into an analysis of job opportunities in your future.*

*Chapter 2 helps you to understand the present and predict the future by looking at past history. You can trace significant practices “back to their roots.”*

*Chapter 3 completes the time line by bringing you up to date since the reawakening to the importance of early childhood that has taken place in this country (and abroad) since the mid-1960s.*

*Some of the other parts to this book have longer introductions because we felt the group of chapters needed some extended explanation. In Part One, the chapters can speak for themselves. They are designed to appeal to your senses, to your pragmatic need for satisfying employment, and to your intellectual needs for understanding your place in time (historically speaking) and in space (internationally speaking). With background such as this, you increase your professional knowledge and develop more appropriate attitudes.*

# CHAPTER 1

*"Early childhood experiences  
leave long-lasting impressions."*







# WHAT'S IT LIKE AND WHERE DO I FIT?

*Jill Bardwell and James L. Hoot*

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Largely out of curiosity, Pat, Chris, and Lee approached the office of a well-known professor of early childhood education on a college campus.

Pat spoke, "I like this motto on the door, 'Early childhood experiences leave long-lasting impressions.' "

"How about this one?" said Lee. "'Children are our greatest resource.' "

"Let's go on in," suggested Chris, "and ask some questions about early childhood education. I hear there are some good jobs, and I'd like to know more about the field."

The professor opened the door. "Couldn't help overhearing your conversation. I'd like to talk with you about the field. But I'm leaving to go by some early childhood settings. Have to drop off some brochures."

"Could we have some of the addresses so we could visit?" asked Linda.

"It's a bit more complicated than that—phone calls, appointments. . . . I'll tell you what; if you'd like, you can come along with me. In an hour's time you can see three settings, and we can talk along the way."

### *What's It Like?—Scenes to Remember*

#### SCENE 1: A DAY CARE CENTER

"The Shirley Smith Child Development Center. . . ." Pat read the big letters adorning the far-left corner of the Maddox Corporation office building and assembly plant.

"This is an example," said the professor, closing the car door, "of an important and growing trend in child care. Facilities like this, associated with private industry, make it possible for working parents to be close to their children, to have them located in the same spot. Also, the father or mother is saved from taking one child to infant care, one to preschool, and one to yet another location for kindergarten."

"During work breaks the parents can come to see the children?"

"Right. The children feel they are not all that far away from the parents. They can even go, on occasion, to see where the parent works and what he or she does."

"What is the age range cared for here?"

"Infancy to age 5½."

Leaving the smell of freshly mixed tar, boiling and ready for new construction across the street, the group entered the imposing brick and glass building. Inside, the first thing Pat, Chris, and Lee saw was a two-story atrium with palms and other trees reaching for the skylight, a quiet pool with goldfish, and tropical plants embracing each other in the filtered sunlight.

"Children are allowed to come here on escorted walks, especially when the weather is too bad for them to use even the covered part of their playground. Interestingly, the administration of this company planned for this center from the beginning."

"Why?"

"Partly from a humanitarian commitment, partly from ideas gained from visits to foreign countries where such facilities are a common accompaniment to industry, and partly with the following thought in mind: when customers have two equal prospects, they are more likely to do business with a company engaging in humanitarian enterprises, such as offering child care facilities for the employees."

"Do the parents pay?" asked Chris.

"Yes, about \$25 a week for the first child, and \$20 a week for each additional child. But since the company is committed to the best in equipment, maintenance, and qualified personnel with degrees (paid well—in order to retain them), the operation does not make a profit. Some children whose parents are employed in neighboring businesses are admitted for a slightly higher charge."

By now the group had approached the office of the child care director, which was glassed in and displayed various kinds of first aid equipment, medicines prescribed for certain children, some of the children's paintings, and a license for child care issued by the state.

The director greeted them warmly and agreed to give them a quick tour.

"How many people work here? What kinds of backgrounds do they have?" asked Chris.

"I have three teachers with professional degrees in child development or early childhood education. These teachers have four assistants who have two-year junior college degrees. In addition to a full-time cook, we have an assistant cook who also works with the children. Just this year she began working toward a degree in early childhood education. From a high school work-study program, I have a student who will spend two years with us. We still have our first high school student who went on to college for her degree. We also have a number of college students who are observers or student teachers. We are not using parent volunteers on a regular basis at present. We have to be a bit careful that parents don't leave their regular work hours to come down to help us. The management, however, is considerate about emergencies."

"What do you mean? What kind of emergencies?"

"I don't mean just times when several staff members are ill and we can't find help to cover or when a child suddenly becomes ill. I mean more subtle problems. For example, the other day one of our four-year-olds accidentally tore a hole in his picture when the big felt-tip marker