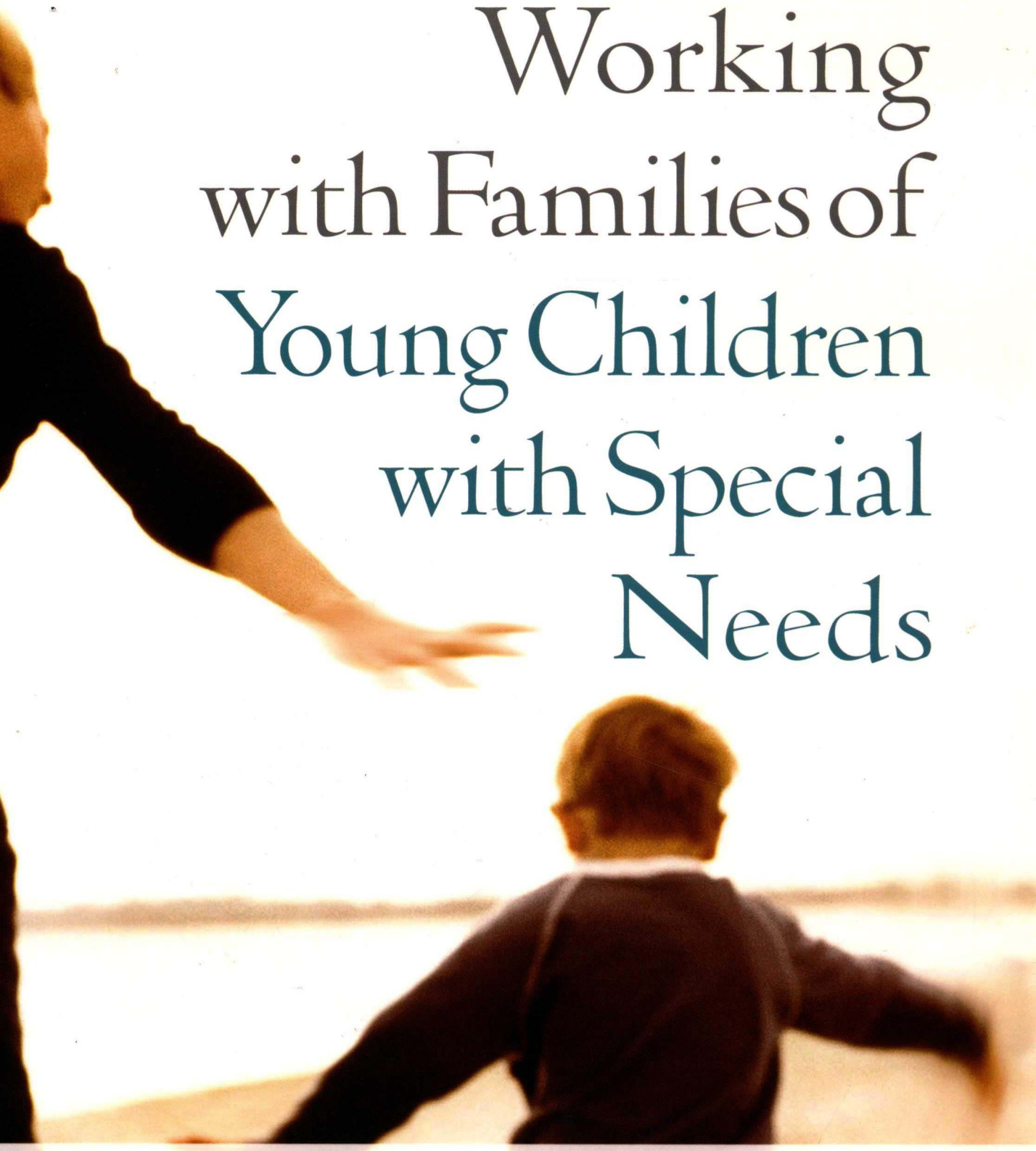
WHAT WORKS FOR SPECIAL-NEEDS LEARNERS

Karen R. Harris and Steve Graham, *Series Editors*

Working with Families of Young Children with Special Needs



edited by R. A. McWilliam

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Series Editors' Note by Karen R. Harris and Steve Graham

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Working with Families of Young Children with Special Needs
R. A. McWilliam, Editor

Promoting Executive Function in the Classroom
Lynn Meltzer

About the Editor

R. A. McWilliam, PhD, is Director of the Center for Child and Family Research at Siskin Children's Institute, a pioneering and far-reaching nonprofit organization for children, families, and professionals in Chattanooga, and Professor in the College of Health, Education and Professional Studies at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He develops interventions for young children with disabilities that always involve the children's families; conducts research on the development of individualized family service plans, child engagement, and service delivery methods; and provides consultation, training, and technical assistance throughout the United States. Dr. McWilliam has served as Director of the Center for Child Development at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and as Senior Scientist at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is past president of the Division for Research of the Council for Exceptional Children and past editor of the *Journal of Early Intervention.* Dr. McWilliam is the author of *Family-Centered Intervention Planning: A Routines-Based Resource* (1992) and of the upcoming *Routines-Based Early Intervention* (in press); the editor of *Rethinking Pull-Out Services in Early Intervention: A Professional Resource* (1996); and the coauthor, with Amy M. Casey, of *Engagement of Every Child in the Preschool Classroom* (2007).

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Series Editors' Note

When Dr. Smith dies, he goes directly to the pearly gates, where he sees a large group of people waiting to get into heaven. Ignoring the crowd, Dr. Smith walks to the front of the line and informs St. Peter that he is a doctor and wants to go through the gate. In no uncertain terms, he is told to go to the end of the line. "But you don't understand," he complains, "I am a doctor!"

A few minutes later, another person goes to the head of the line and tells St. Peter he wants to enter heaven too. St. Peter also tells him to go to the end of the line, and the man exclaims, "You don't understand, I am Dr. Jones!"

As the two doctors stand at the end of the line commiserating, they spot another man approaching St. Peter. This man is wearing a lab coat, with a stethoscope hanging from his neck. After saying something to St. Peter, he enters heaven.

Irritated, the two doctors approach St. Peter and ask why "that man" did not have to stand in line. A man further back in line replies, "Oh, that's just God. He thinks he's a doctor!"

This joke illustrates a simple but powerful truth—sometimes professionals act as if they and their opinions are more important than the clients they serve. In *Working with Families of Young Children with Special Needs*, R. A. McWilliam and his contributors hold a different view about the relationship between professionals and clients, who, in this case, are families of young children with disabilities. The role of professionals in early childhood special education is to support families in a friendly and collaborative manner, while at the same time providing families and other caregivers with supports necessary for their children to learn needed skills within the context of everyday routines.

Just as important, Dr. McWilliam and his contributors emphasize that special education and early childhood professionals need to concentrate on more than just a child's competence. They advocate a balanced approach to working with families, in which quality of life is valued.

You are in for a great ride, as the message in this book is not only family friendly, but extremely practical. It combines a solid foundation of research, along with a good dose of common sense, tempered by considerable experience in working with young children with special needs and their families. Get ready to learn about ecomaps, routine-based interviews, the primary-coach approach, family centeredness, and more.

This book is part of the series What Works for Special-Needs Learners. The series addresses a significant need in the education of learners with special needs—students who are at risk, those with disabilities, and all children and adolescents who struggle with learning or behavior. Researchers in special education, educational psychology, curriculum and instruction, and other fields have made great progress in understanding what works for struggling learners, yet the practical application of this research base remains quite limited. This is due, in part, to the lack of appropriate materials for teachers, teacher educators, and in-service teacher development programs. Books in this series present assessment, instructional, and classroom management methods with a strong research base and provide specific "how-to" instructions and examples of the use of proven procedures in schools. All volumes in the series are thorough and detailed and facilitate the implementation of evidence-based practices in classrooms and schools.

KAREN R. HARRIS
STEVE GRAHAM

Contents

Introduction

R. A. McWilliam

Working with Families of Young Children with Special Needs is designed for professionals in the trenches, local program administrators, and students. Readers who regularly work with, or soon will work with, families of children with disabilities from birth to 5 years of age will find practical information at a hitherto unprecedented level of detail. This book will be pertinent to professionals and students from a wide variety of disciplines, such as early childhood special educators, social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech–language pathologists.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The purpose of this book is to present the most advanced thinking about appropriate methods of working with families of young children with disabilities. By "advanced thinking," I mean that the information is largely based on research or consistent with theory that has evolved over 35 years of intense growth in the field. Two of the most important theoretical and empirical bases for the practices are the *family-centered approach* and *social-support theory*. The former is rooted in family systems theory (Turnbull, Poston, Minnes, & Summers, 2007), ecobehavioral and developmental perspectives on how children learn (Greenwood, Carta, & Dawson, 2000; Vygotsky & Stone, 2005), and the consultative approach to how services work (McWilliam, 2003). The latter has implications for ways of serving families—in

a supportive manner (Turnbull et al., 2007)—as well as implications for making resources available to families (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994). By "appropriate methods," I mean the values and practices employed to carry out early intervention.

1. The first critical value is conducting interventions with children in the context of everyday routines rather than in sessions (Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006).
2. The second value is working with families in a family-friendly manner rather than merely involving them in response to compliance requirements (Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2007).
3. The third value is the concentration on family quality of life versus just on child competence (Lucyshyn et al., 2007).

Five practices are essential to my designation of appropriate methods: assessing informal and formal supports, assessing functional needs in everyday situations, coordinating services, using home visits to provide support, and consulting collaboratively with child care providers.

How Each Chapter Is Related to the Purpose

Each chapter is tied to the three values and five behaviors just described, which form the skeleton of the book around which the flesh and blood of actual strategies are formed.

In Chapter 1, Lee Ann Jung explains the use of ecomaps in assessing a family's ecology. A family's network of informal and formal supports is part of the family system. Examining the family's context is consistent with an ecobehavioral perspective as well as a social-support perspective. The ecomap is the specific practice for identifying resources available to the family.

In Chapter 2, I describe the Routines-Based Interview™, which assesses different family members' roles—a function consistent with family systems theory. The process is family friendly; explores resources available, especially informal ones; is obviously routines based; and includes a measure of family quality of life.

In Chapter 3, Carl Dunst, Melinda Raab, Carol Trivette, and Jennifer Swanson discuss serving families in the context of their communities. They define early intervention in part according to ecobehavioral and developmental principles about how children learn in routines. This chapter introduces the importance of "competency-enhancing outcomes that constitute measures of successful or effective early childhood intervention practices." The concept of caregiver-mediated everyday child learning that Dunst et al. discuss provides details on how children learn and how the implementation of caregiver-mediated practices is routines based.

In Chapter 4, Mary Beth Bruder reviews research showing that service coordination practices have been grouped in relational and participatory helpgiving,

which is related to ways of serving families. The chapter discusses the use of an ecological framework for evaluating service coordination, consistent with the book's ecobehavioral perspective. Service coordination involves assisting families in choosing available service providers, which is connected to resources available to families.

In Chapter 5, P. J. McWilliam addresses professionals' interactional behaviors with families. She describes the importance of creating opportunities to have informal exchanges with families, typifying both the value of being family friendly and the principle of social support. Acknowledging child and family strengths recognizes the significance of the family's quality of life, and soliciting parents' opinions and seeking understanding are consistent with the consultative approach to families. Responding to feelings exemplifies both family friendliness and family quality of life.

Chapter 6 deals with diversity in early intervention, and Marci J. Hanson and Eleanor W. Lynch describe the importance of being family friendly with families from different cultures. Building relationships with families, recognizing and respecting diversity, is consistent with ways of serving families. Beliefs about family roles and views about children and childrearing are related to the consultative approach, and partnering with families to develop and address goals is related to social support. The authors describe special considerations in home-based services, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 8 on support-based home visits.

Teaming is discussed in Chapter 7, where M'Lisa L. Shelden and Dathan D. Rush define the primary-coach approach as one way to coordinate services. They describe natural learning environment practices, which illustrates one of the major points of this book—the distinction between routines and sessions. The parent-coaching section is related to support-based home visits, and the section on participation-based individualized family service plan (IFSP) outcomes is related both to assessing functional needs in everyday situations and the section on writing functional outcomes in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 8, I address quality home visits, describing the FACINATE model, which is connected to all the values and practices, but principally support-based home visits. The five key principles are consistent with all three values undergirding this book (already outlined), and the section on transdisciplinary service delivery is consistent with Chapter 7 in terms of practices involving the professional's role with the family (i.e., coach). The functional child domains featured in the chapter are related to the routines-based approach. Teaching parents to teach their children is consistent with how children learn.

Chapter 9 deals with challenging behaviors, and Lise Fox has described the effect of challenging behavior on the families in a way that is related to the concept of family quality of life. She has provided a framework for providing support, which is consistent with support-based home visits. Finally, providing information on positive parenting is related to how children learn.

BASIC THEMES

The three basic themes of the book are as follows:

1. How professionals should treat families (family friendliness).
2. What professionals should do with families (family centeredness).
3. Addressing family-level needs.

Although all chapters are consistent with the values and practices described earlier, they have some similarities and differences. Some chapters emphasize philosophical underpinnings (3, 4, 7, 9), whereas others emphasize procedures (1, 2, 5, 8). Some are closely related to planning (1, 2, 4), whereas others are closely related to intervention itself (3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

VOICES IN THE CHAPTERS

Voices vary, and this variety has been preserved in part to provide diversity and in part to reflect the character of the different authors. These authors are luminaries in early intervention and early childhood special education and their individuality deserves to be maintained.

EARLY INTERVENTION/EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION TERMINOLOGY

Rationale

Some terms are commonplace in early intervention/early childhood special education but not necessarily to the broader field of special education. The following brief glossary might help. Full descriptions of many of these terms are found within the book itself.

Brief Glossary

Collaborative consultation. This is a method of providing technical assistance in a manner involving *joint* decisions between the consultant and the consultee, such as between the therapist and the child care provider. It is applied most often in this book in the context of the provision of early childhood special education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech–language to children in group care.

Consultative approach. This term describes early intervention aimed at the child's natural caregivers, such as parents and teachers, rather than directly at the child. It is used when the number of contact hours a professional has with the child is insufficient

to make a difference in the child's learning or development, whereas the number of hours the caregivers have is sufficient to make a difference.

Contextually mediated practices. This term, coined by Carl Dunst et al. (see Chapter 3), is an intervention approach involving (1) the identification of children's interests and the everyday community and family activities that constitute the makeup of a child's life, (2) the selection of those activities that provide the best opportunities for interest-based learning, (3) an increase in child participation in interest-based, everyday learning opportunities, (4) the use of different interactional techniques for supporting and encouraging child competence, exploration, and mastery in the activities, and (5) an evaluation of the effectiveness of parent-mediated everyday child learning opportunities in terms of both child and parent benefits (Dunst, 2006; Dunst & Swanson, 2006).

Developmental perspectives. These perspectives refer to the practice of matching interactions, activities, and environments to the child's maturity or just above it, without establishing expectations more appropriate for older children. One characteristic of these perspectives can sometimes be a "constructivist" approach that deemphasizes direct instruction and emphasizes exploration and self-learning. This characteristic is generally repudiated by behaviorists.

Ecobehavioral perspectives. These perspectives refer to the practice of manipulating the interactions, activities, and environments to reinforce desired behavior and sometimes to withhold reinforcement for undesired behavior. One characteristic of these perspectives can sometimes be a structured approach that emphasizes the antecedents established by adults and deemphasizes independent initiations. This approach is generally repudiated by developmentalists.

Ecological framework. This framework stresses the impact of the social and sometimes the physical environment on children's learning. It can involve Bronfenbrenner's idea of systems moving outward from the child to include the family, the early intervention program, extended family, the neighborhood, and society. It can also refer to the behavioral idea that teaching young children involves manipulation of the environment.

Ecology. This word refers to the child's environment and does not have anything to do with being "green."

Ecomaps. These are pictures that professionals draw with families of families' informal, intermediate, and formal supports that show the strength of support each entity provides.

Family centeredness. This term refers to the way we treat families and what we attend to. The way we treat families consists of attitudes and behaviors such as positiveness, responsiveness, orientation to the whole family, friendliness, and sensitivity. What we attend to includes the needs of family members in addition to the child's, following the theory that what affects one family member has an impact on all other family members (i.e., family systems theory).

Family quality of life. This construct can involve a subjective appraisal by, in this case, the family. This would include families' satisfaction with their daily routines, for exam-