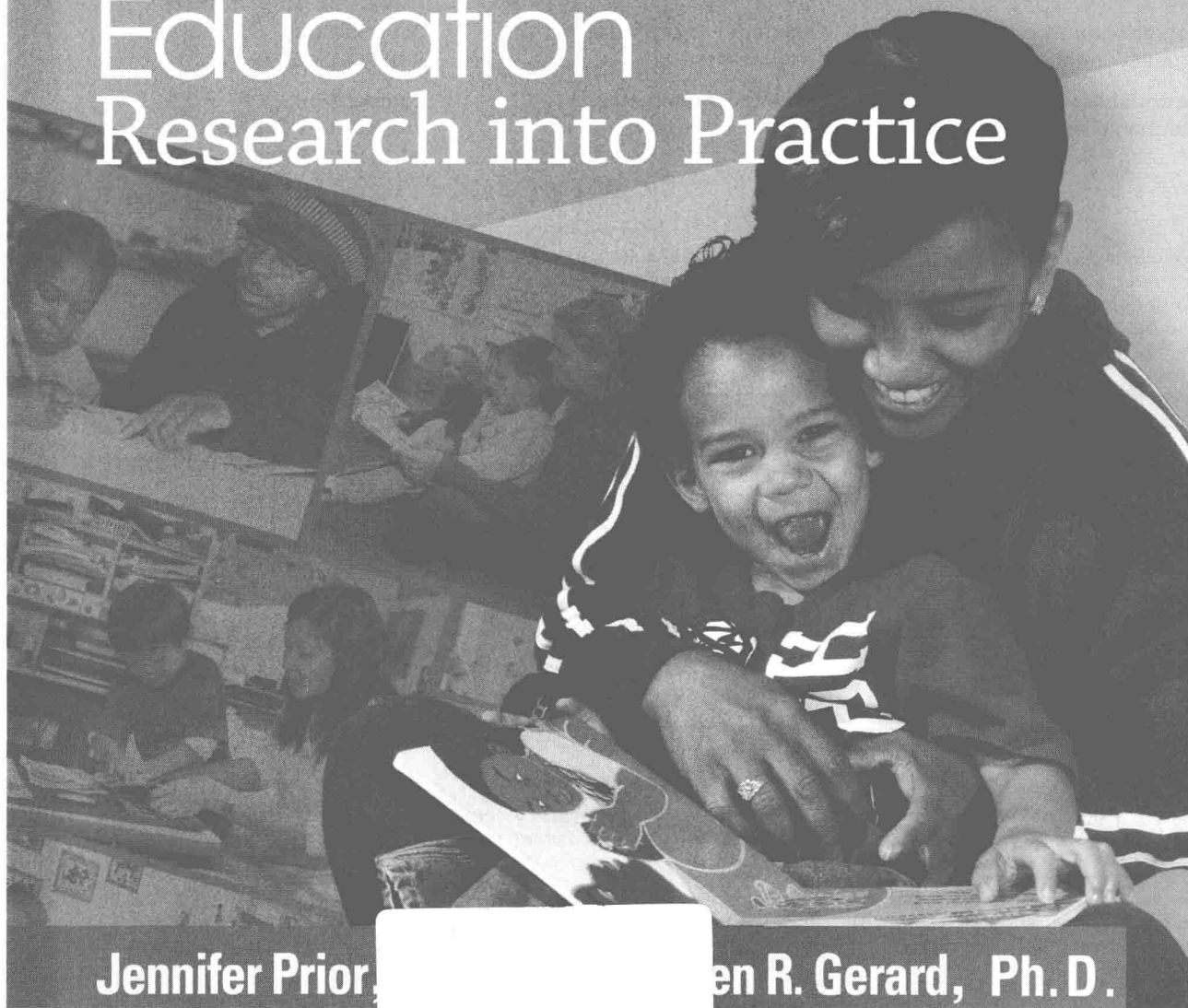


# Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education Research into Practice



Jennifer Prior,

en R. Gerard, Ph.D.

THOMSON



DELMAR LEARNING

Australia Canada Mexico Singapore Spain United Kingdom United States

**Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education: Research into Practice**  
Jennifer Prior and Maureen R. Gerard

**Vice President, Career Education SBU:**  
Dawn Gerrain

**Managing Editor:**  
Robert L. Serenka, Jr.

**Senior Acquisitions Editor:**  
Erin O'Connor

**Editorial Assistant:**  
Stephanie Kelly

**Director of Production:**  
Wendy A. Troeger

**Production Manager:**  
J.P. Henkel

**Content Project Manager:**  
Ken Karges

**Director of Marketing:**  
Wendy E. Mapstone

**Channel Manager:**  
Kristin McNary

**Marketing Coordinator:**  
Scott A. Chrysler

**Cover Design:**  
Joseph Villanova

**Composition:**  
International Typesetting  
and Composition

Copyright © 2007 Thomson Delmar Learning, a part of The Thomson Corporation. Thomson, the Star logo, and Delmar Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

Printed in the United States  
1 2 3 4 5 XXX 10 09 08 07 06

For more information contact  
Thomson Delmar Learning,  
Executive Woods, 5 Maxwell Drive,  
Clifton Park, NY 12065-2919.

Or find us on the World Wide Web at  
[www.thomsonlearning.com](http://www.thomsonlearning.com), [www.delmarlearning.com](http://www.delmarlearning.com), or [www.earlychilded.delmar.com](http://www.earlychilded.delmar.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from this text or product, submit a request online at  
<http://www.thomsonrights.com>

Any additional questions about permissions can be submitted by email to  
[thomsonrights@thomson.com](mailto:thomsonrights@thomson.com)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Prior, Jennifer Overend, 1963—  
Family involvement in early childhood education: research into practice / Jennifer Prior, Maureen Gerard.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-4180-1424-9

1. Early childhood education—Parent participation. I. Gerard, Maureen R. II. Title.

LB1139.35.P37P75 2007  
372.1192—dc22

2006019016

**NOTICE TO THE READER**

Publisher does not warrant or guarantee any of the products described herein or perform any independent analysis in connection with any of the product information contained herein. Publisher does not assume, and expressly disclaims, any obligation to obtain and include information other than that provided to it by the manufacturer.

The reader is expressly warned to consider and adopt all safety precautions that might be indicated by the activities herein and to avoid all potential hazards. By following the instructions contained herein, the reader willingly assumes all risks in connection with such instructions.

The Publisher makes no representation or warranties of any kind, including but not limited to, the warranties of fitness for particular purpose or merchantability, nor are any such representations implied with respect to the material set forth herein, and the publisher takes no responsibility with respect to such material. The publisher shall not be liable for any special, consequential, or exemplary damages resulting, in whole or part, from the readers' use of, or reliance upon, this material.

The authors and Thomson Delmar Learning affirm that the Web site URLs referenced herein were accurate at the time of printing. However, due to the fluid nature of the Internet, we cannot guarantee their accuracy for the life of the edition.

# Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education Research into Practice



Join us on the web at

**EarlyChildEd.delmar.com**

# Preface

Early childhood has gained considerable attention in the field of education. No Child Left Behind and its requirements for highly qualified teachers has affected the preparation of teachers in early childhood. A growing body of research also draws attention to the benefits of family involvement related to children, schools, teachers, and parents. Because the thought of family involvement can be overwhelming and even frightening to the novice teacher, this book breaks down the process and will assist you with developing your own plan for the families of your future students. It describes the current and ongoing research related to the important benefits of family involvement as it pertains to student achievement, as well as practical ideas and specific activities for students in undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs to assist them in getting parents involved in their children's education at school and at home. This book also offers ideas for the parents and teachers of infants and toddlers as well as the parents and teachers of school-age children. While the main focus is on early childhood, ideas can be applied to students in intermediate grades. The ideas and specific activities featured in this book are designed for instant use by classroom teachers with a format that is teacher-friendly.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TEXT

As practitioners who are now teacher educators, we are sensitive to the gap between research and its application to the classroom. In our university courses we have tried to bridge this gap by making the linkages from research to practice, providing students with the “why” of family involvement

to encourage their exploration of the “how.” An extensive review of the literature is provided throughout the chapters of this book. The most current research is examined along with seminal or classic works.

## **TEXT ORGANIZATION**

The organization of this book stems from our experiences as classroom teachers and the most current areas of research. Presentation of this information takes the reader from knowledge to application in a variety of areas related to family involvement. It is our desire that our students and teachers have a well-grounded understanding of the research to thoughtfully and reflectively reproduce effective materials and implement strategies in the classroom.

Chapter 1, *Benefits of Family Involvement in the Early Years*, presents the benefits of parent-teacher partnerships and parent-child interactions related to education. There is a wealth of research on this subject; understanding these benefits is inspirational and sure to make even the most timid of teachers consider a plan for family involvement.

Chapter 2, *Diverse Families: Then, Now, Tomorrow*, provides a brief historical trip through the views of families. This chapter also examines the diversity of family structures today, including ethnicity, language, and economic factors.

Many school districts, administrators, and teachers don’t know where to begin to get families involved. They are often overwhelmed with other tasks or feel uncomfortable communicating with parents. In Chapter 3, *Challenges to an Effective Partnerships in the Early Years*, we’ll take a look at the barriers and differences such as culture and socioeconomic status that can prevent positive parent-teacher partnerships. This chapter will address many of the challenges to effective family involvement and offer suggestions for how to overcome them.

Chapter 4 addresses male involvement. More and more research focuses on the involvement of fathers and male mentors in a child’s education. As teachers, we tend to think about moms being involved in their children’s education and we don’t encourage fathers and male role models. This chapter presents important research in this area and provides strategies for communicating with fathers as well as designing school activities that cater to men.

Family involvement is much more complex than helping out in the classroom; it means developing and fostering effective partnerships between

teachers and parents. Chapter 5, *Creating Partnerships at School in the Early Years*, presents family involvement models and ideas to begin these partnerships. It also focuses on specific ways to get started with building parent-teacher partnerships. Strategies such as regular communication, providing opportunities for parents to help out at school, planning for parent help in the classroom, and scheduling for parent helpers are presented. The ideas in this chapter help to lay the foundation for building positive relationships with parents.

We know that not all parents have the freedom to be involved with their children's education at school. In fact, there is a great misunderstanding that family involvement must take place at school. Realistically, we know this isn't possible for all parents. Chapter 6, *Family Involvement at Home in the Early Years*, focuses on ways teachers can involve parents in their children's education at home by providing newsletters of ideas for parent-child interaction, backpack activities containing educational activities for parents and children to complete together, and a variety of activities and resources for busy parents to be involved in from home.

Chapter 7, *Family Involvement with Infant/Toddler Care and Education*, addresses research related to the importance of parents as children's first teachers. This chapter also gives child care providers strategies for successful parent education and collaboration.

The final chapter, *Building a Comprehensive Program for Family Involvement in the Early Years*, presents ways to develop school-wide programs by involving other teachers and administrators in the process of building partnerships. This chapter also provides schedules, letters, progress report forms, and activities for parent workshops that can be used to educate parents and provide them with ideas in a variety of areas concerning their children's school experience.

## **UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE BOOK**

In addition to providing instant family involvement activities, this book also features elements that encourage individual, small group, and class reflection. Each chapter begins with a list of key terms and definitions that will be encountered. *Families in Focus*, which are real-life scenarios, are provided to give readers a glimpse of classroom life and diverse family experiences. At the conclusion of each chapter, review questions and exercises are provided to encourage reflection and application of the featured topic. The authors' intent is that this book be used initially as coursework material



and later becomes a teacher resource. The eight chapters can easily be used as the foundation of an 8-week modular format or a component of the course material in a 16-week semester.

## ANCILLARY MATERIALS

Accompanying this book are three additional resources—the Professional Enhancement Booklet, the e-Resource, and the Online Companion™.



### Professional Enhancement Booklet

A new supplement to accompany this text is the Home, School, and Community Relations booklet for students. This booklet, which is part of Thomson Delmar Learning's Early Childhood Education Professional Enhancement series, focuses on key topics of interest to future early childhood directors, teachers, and caregivers. Students will keep this informational supplement and use it for years to come in their early childhood practices.



### e-Resource

The new e-Resource component is geared to provide instructors with all the tools they need on one convenient CD-ROM. Instructors will find that this resource provides them with a turnkey solution to help them teach by making available PowerPoint® slides for each book chapter, the Computerized Test Bank, electronic version of the Instructor's Manual, and other text-specific resources.

The computerized test bank is comprised of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and completion questions for each chapter. Instructors can use the computerized test bank software to create quizzes for students. Refer to the CTB User's Guide for more information on how to create and post quizzes to your school's Internet or Intranet server.



### Online Companion™

The Online Companion™ includes:

- Links to useful Web sites
- Downloadable forms, letters, and activity sheets featured in the book
- Suggestions for further research



- Case studies for further discussion accompanied by critical thinking questions
- The Online Companion™ can be accessed at [www.earlychildedelmar.com](http://www.earlychildedelmar.com).

## A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHORS

### Jennifer Prior

Most preservice teachers have never given much thought to working with families and little is offered in their preparation coursework to prepare them to work well with parents. They went into teaching to teach kids, right? Why do we need to talk about their parents? More than 20 years ago, I was one of those new teachers who planned on teaching children, but not necessarily working with parents. In fact, I avoided parents whenever I could. If there were a reason to talk with parents, it could only mean “bad news.” But what I found was that the more I avoided, the more parents wanted to interact. And why shouldn’t they? Education is important and the education of one’s own child is of utmost importance.

As I look back on my teaching career, I realize that I wasn’t prepared to work with families, nor did I understand the benefits of family involvement. After a few years, I decided to begin sending home a weekly newsletter to parents, informing them of what was to come in the week ahead. Little did I know that this simple form of communication would do so much to ease parents’ minds about what their children were learning in my classroom. Parents appreciated it so much that I wondered why I had waited so long to begin some form of regular communication with them. What I found was that parents would approach me to discuss some of the great activities going on in the classroom. Because they were informed about what was happening in class, they were able to ask their children specific questions and hear the excitement in their children’s voices as they talked about what they were learning.

Later on in my career, I made greater efforts to get to know and interact with families. At the beginning of the year, I made plans for how to get them involved (inside and outside the classroom). I sent home descriptions of parent jobs and encouraged them to sign up to help on a regular basis. At school events or after school, I would seek them out and make efforts to visit for a while. Phone calls and notes became commonplace, and I found the more effort I made, the more parents trusted me, and the more they seemed to value their children’s education.

## **Maureen Gerard**

Like most new teachers I was scared to death of parents. As a preservice teacher I'd had no coursework in family involvement and didn't know where to begin. After finding myself in an adversarial position on more than one occasion, I began looking for resources and ways to change family interactions in my classroom. I soon realized that a proactive form of communication each week went a long way in answering parents' questions. A progress report that covered multiple domains reassured parents and eased all of us into report card conferences. The parents' enthusiasm led to positive interactions, which made me feel much more comfortable to be around them. By implementing effective strategies (many of which are featured in this book) I found that parents became my greatest source of support and encouragement.

## **Final Message from the Authors**

Family involvement or forming parent-teacher partnerships has now become a passion of ours and we realize that it is the teacher's responsibility to reach out and make efforts for the ultimate benefit of students. For this reason, we write this book to address the important issues related to family involvement, especially in the early years of a child's education. It is our hope that, after reading this book, you, too, will have new insights into building positive parent-teacher partnerships. It will take time to begin forming these relationships, but we must remember that our efforts, in the long run, serve to benefit young children.

Jennifer Prior is Assistant Professor of Early Childhood and Literacy at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Maureen Gerard is Associate Professor of Reading and Early Childhood at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We acknowledge all of the children and families who were our teachers along the way.

In addition, we would like to thank the following reviewers, whose valuable feedback helped to shape the final text:

Nancy H. Beaver, M.Ed.  
Eastfield College of the Dallas County Community College District, TX

Marie Brand, M.S.  
State University of New York, Empire College

Patricia J. Dilko, M.P.A.  
Canada College, CA

Phyllis Gilbert, M.S., M.Ed.  
Stephen F. Austin University, TX

Karen Danbom  
Minnesota State University Moorhead, MN

Christie Honeycutt, M.Ed.  
Stanley College, NC

Dawn Murrell, M.A.  
Baker College, MI

Cheryl Robinson, Ph.D.  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville, TN

Elaine Van Lue  
Nova Southeastern University, FL

Gwendolyn J. Williams, Ph.D.  
Florida A&M University, FL

Please note the Internet resources are of a time-sensitive nature and URL addresses may often change or be deleted.

# Contents

PREFACE .....	xv
---------------	----

## CHAPTER 1

Benefits of Family Involvement in the Early Years .....	1
--	---

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES .....	1
--------------------------	---

KEY TERMS .....	1
-----------------	---

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT .....	2
--	---

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	3
-----------------------------	---

Jean Piaget and Inhelder .....	3
--------------------------------	---

John Dewey .....	3
------------------	---

Vygotsky .....	4
----------------	---

Bronfenbrenner .....	5
----------------------	---

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND MODELS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ..	8
---	---

BENEFITS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ..	11
-----------------------------------	----

BULLYING .....	14
----------------	----

BENEFITS RELATED TO CURRICULAR AREAS .....	17
---	----

Reading .....	17
---------------	----

Mathematics .....	17
-------------------	----

	Early Childhood . . . . .	18
	Long-Term Benefits: Elementary through High School . . . . .	19
	TEACHER AND FAMILY BENEFITS . . . . .	20
	CONCLUSION . . . . .	22
	SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS . . . . .	22
	CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS . . . . .	23
	APPLICATION AND REFLECTION . . . . .	24
	FURTHER READING . . . . .	24
	REFERENCES . . . . .	25
CHAPTER	<b>2</b>	
	Diverse Families: Then, Now, Tomorrow . . . . .	31
	CHAPTER OBJECTIVES . . . . .	31
	KEY TERMS . . . . .	31
	HISTORICAL VIEWS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT . . . . .	32
	FAMILIES TODAY . . . . .	34
	Family Structures in a Changing Society . . . . .	39
	Socioeconomic Status . . . . .	40
	Language and Culture . . . . .	43
	CONCLUSION . . . . .	48
	SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS . . . . .	48
	CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS . . . . .	49
	APPLICATION AND REFLECTION . . . . .	49
	FURTHER READING . . . . .	49
	REFERENCES . . . . .	50
CHAPTER	<b>3</b>	
	Challenges to Effective Partnerships in the Early Years . . . . .	53
	CHAPTER OBJECTIVES . . . . .	53
	KEY TERMS . . . . .	53

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	.54
PERCEPTIONS	.54
SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE	.58
LANGUAGE BARRIERS	.59
CULTURAL BARRIERS	.61
DIVORCE	.63
LOGISTICAL BARRIERS	.66
WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PARENTS	.66
CONCLUSION	.69
SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS	.69
CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS	.71
APPLICATION AND REFLECTION	.71
FURTHER READING	.72
REFERENCES	.72

## CHAPTER 4

Involving Fathers and Male Role Models	.75
CHAPTER OBJECTIVES	.75
KEY TERMS	.76
RESEARCH ON MALE INVOLVEMENT	.76
Fathers Matter in Children's Well-Being	.77
Fathers Matter in Education	.77
BARRIERS TO FATHER INVOLVEMENT	.80
Myths and Assumptions about Fathers	.81
Fathers' Fears and Gendered Schooling	.81
PROGRAM AND POLICY BARRIERS	.82
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING MALE INVOLVEMENT	.83
Scheduling	.86
Communicating with Fathers and Male Role Models	.88
Introduction to the Workshop	.90

Information Groups for Men . . . . .	95
Including Male Role Models in the Classroom . . . . .	96
CONCLUSION . . . . .	101
SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS . . . . .	101
CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS . . . . .	102
APPLICATION AND REFLECTION . . . . .	102
FURTHER READING . . . . .	102
REFERENCES . . . . .	103

## CHAPTER 5

Creating Partnerships at School in the Early Years . . . . .	105
CHAPTER OBJECTIVES . . . . .	105
KEY TERMS . . . . .	106
PLANNING FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT . . . . .	106
FIRST IMPRESSIONS . . . . .	108
COMMUNICATION . . . . .	109
Making Personal Connections . . . . .	109
Back-to-School Night . . . . .	111
Supplies . . . . .	111
Presentation . . . . .	112
Weekly Newsletters . . . . .	115
Parent Phone Calls . . . . .	118
ONE-ON-ONE WITH PARENTS . . . . .	120
Developing Partnerships . . . . .	121
Building Confidence and Fostering Appreciation . . . . .	121
Active Listening . . . . .	121
Opening the Lines of Communication . . . . .	122
PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES . . . . .	122
PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM . . . . .	123
Parent Jobs . . . . .	124
Scheduling . . . . .	127
Training Sessions . . . . .	128



MANAGING IN THE CLASSROOM . . . . .	130
Parent Tasks with Children . . . . .	133
Parent Organizational Tasks . . . . .	134
SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION . . . . .	136
CONCLUSION . . . . .	136
SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS . . . . .	136
CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS . . . . .	137
APPLICATION AND REFLECTION . . . . .	137
FURTHER READING . . . . .	137
REFERENCES . . . . .	138

## CHAPTER 6

Family Involvement at Home during the Early Years . . . . .	141
CHAPTER OBJECTIVES . . . . .	141
KEY TERMS . . . . .	141
FAMILIES AT HOME . . . . .	142
LITERACY . . . . .	143
FAMILIES AND LITERACY . . . . .	143
Homes of Early Readers . . . . .	144
Parent-Child Activity Letters . . . . .	148
Backpack Activities . . . . .	173
CONCLUSION . . . . .	187
SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS . . . . .	187
CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS . . . . .	187
APPLICATION AND REFLECTION . . . . .	187
FURTHER READING . . . . .	188
REFERENCES . . . . .	188

## CHAPTER 7

Family Involvement with Infant/Toddler Care and Education . . . . .	191
CHAPTER OBJECTIVES . . . . .	191
KEY TERMS . . . . .	191

THE EARLY INFANT AND TODDLER YEARS .....	192
RESEARCH ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WITH INFANT/TODDLER CARE AND EDUCATION .....	192
The Brain Research .....	193
Involving Parents and Families .....	201
ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING INVOLVEMENT WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS .....	206
Family Home Visits .....	207
Governance and Decision Making .....	208
Communication with Parents .....	209
ENVIRONMENT .....	219
Parent Reception Area .....	220
Parent Board .....	221
Suggestion Box .....	221
Family Friendly .....	222
Documentation of Learning and Development ..	222
CURRICULUM .....	223
RESOURCES FOR PARENTS .....	224
Lending Library of Books, Videos, and Audiotapes .....	224
Parenting Classes, Workshops, Trainings, and Adult Education Courses .....	226
Service Resources .....	227
Service Committees .....	227
CONCLUSION .....	228
SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS ...	228
CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS .....	228
APPLICATION AND REFLECTION .....	229
FURTHER READING .....	229
REFERENCES .....	230