

THIRD
EDITION

Developing and Administering a Child Care Center

Dorothy June Sciarra
Anne G. Dorsey

Developing and Administering
**A CHILD
CARE CENTER**

THIRD EDITION

Dorothy June Sciarra
University of Cincinnati

Anne G. Dorsey
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Delmar Staff

Acquisitions Editor: Jay Whitney
Developmental Editor: Christopher Anzalone
Project Editor: Theresa M. Bobear

Production Coordinator: Jennifer Gaines
Art & Design Coordinator: Douglas Hyldelund

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PREFACE

This third edition was written primarily for students of early childhood education; but like the previous editions, it is also a rich source of updated information for practicing directors. The authors are early childhood education specialists with many years of experience in teaching both at the preschool and college levels. Both authors have administered programs, and Professor Dorsey has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in child care administration for the past two decades. Since the book covers the director's responsibilities for starting a new center and for maintaining an ongoing program, readers are introduced to the total range of administrative demands in different types of early childhood education centers.

A unique feature of this book is its focus on interpersonal relationships, combined with emphasis on developing sound fiscal and program management skills. Funding and budgeting skills, evaluating, hiring, collecting fees, and writing reports are essential for program survival; however, we are convinced that these skills are not sufficient for effective program operation unless they are combined with good interpersonal communication skills. Therefore, the book presents administration information in an interpersonal framework.

Director's Resources and Director's Library are again featured in this edition. The Director's Resources includes sample letters, job descriptions, personnel policies, parent handbook, and many other forms directors may need. An annotated bibliography of resource books supplementing this comprehensive administration text can be found in the Director's Library. The Working Papers at the end of each chapter include suggested assignments and classroom activities for college level students.

Material for the Director's Corner came from interviews with experienced practicing child care directors and/or special educators. We gratefully acknowledge the directors who participated in these informative interviews. They are: Debbie Gleason, Sandy Hoover, Chris Kelly, Pam Mitchell, Barbara Pearson, Annette Quallen, Eila Roark, Diane Rockettenetz, Tracey Rowe, Sally Wehby and others we interviewed for the previous edition. These interviews gave us insight into the "real world" of the working director, and inspired us to make a special place in the book for sharing their words and comments with our readers.

Photos, unless otherwise marked, are by Lisa Souders. Thanks to Diane Blackburn who agreed to serve as the director in all the photos

which required someone in that role. We also appreciate the cooperation of the staff, parents and children at Arlitt Child Development who participated in the photographing. We thank Emily von Allman for coordinating that effort for us. We are indebted to Barton Canfield, Managing Accountant, and Patricia Gleason, Program Administrator for Roark Learning Centers, Inc. for their helpful suggestions relative to center budgets and handling financial matters (covered in Chapters 5 and 6). We would also like to thank the reviewers whose thoughtful comments have made this a better revision.

This updated edition addresses a number of timely issues for the 1990s. Among these are: 1) meeting guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2) increased interest in

inclusive classrooms and the consequent interdisciplinary teams, 3) suggestions for fiscal management including use of computers, and 4) following NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice Guidelines to achieve quality programming and accreditation. Rather than devote separate chapters to new and timely topics, we again elected to incorporate this information at appropriate places throughout the text.

We hope we have been successful not only in presenting the technical information needed to operate a viable program, but also in conveying the challenge and personal satisfaction derived from creating and implementing an excellent educational program for young children and their families.

D.J.S. and A.G.D.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

To Do

- Call plumber 555-1234
- Talk to building inspector ✓ left message
- ~~— Call Red Cross 1st Aid Training dates~~
- ~~— Need detergent~~
- Do statistics for YMCA committee
- Send bills to parents who haven't paid tuition
- Rewrite snack menu
- Check coverage for classroom for Monday – teachers have parent conference ✓ OK–Susie will do
- Meet with Toddler teachers 1:45
- Appointment 5:00 – parents to see center
- Call job applicant for interview for part-time
- Place ad for full-time job – deadline Friday for Sunday paper
- Order supplies
 - tissues
 - paper plates
 - plasic gloves



"Making a 'To Do List' is the only way I can come close to keeping track of the many things I must do each day. I recommend it to your readers who hope to become directors. By the way, I also recommend they learn something about plumbing!"

Director, community agency center

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CHAPTER

1

Developing Interpersonal Relationships



The following quote is from the director of a community nonprofit child care center: "In order to be successful as a director of a child care center, I think, above all else, you have to be a *people person*. You have to realize that this job goes far beyond administrative policy and doing paperwork; that being *the boss* here is not really being a *boss* in the traditional sense. Being the boss here has to do with forming trusting relationships with your staff, respecting their individuality, being firm when you need to be firm

Photo above The emotional tone at the center is set by the way the director feels about others and by the success with which those feelings are communicated to others in the setting. (Photo by Lisa Souders)

and being gentle when they need a gentle hand. It's important to remember that you won't get respect if you don't show respect. Also, remember that others can do the paperwork, but you

are the one who must build the relationships with your staff.”

Clearly, the interpersonal issues and the time it takes to work them out are at the very core of every management position. Much of what follows in this text deals with budgets, boards, licensing, and record keeping, but the *real* task of the director as a manager¹ is to work effectively with, and provide support to, those who will implement the program. The manager must relate to these people and motivate them to do the tasks delegated to them. Members of the staff implement the total program, but the director, acting in the capacity of leader and motivator, orchestrates.

The student may then legitimately ask, “Why learn about boards and budgets? Why not focus on interpersonal skills?” These questions are, indeed, legitimate, but books about interpersonal skills and management strategies have been written by others with particular expertise in both management and communication. The Director’s Library includes helpful suggested readings in the section entitled, “Leading People.” Familiarize yourself with some of those books so that as you learn about budgeting and buying equipment, developing personnel policies or planning a facility you will be able to use that information in concert with effective interpersonal strategies.

The discussion in this chapter focuses on the importance of first developing good management skills and then using these skills, coupled with good communication skills, as the basis for functioning as an administrator of a child care center or any other type of child care program. Obviously, the person in charge must have knowledge of how to draw up a budget, write policy and job descriptions, decide about equipment, and so forth. However, writing policy, hiring staff, making budgets, and ordering equipment will all be wasted efforts unless the manager has those special interpersonal and communication skills necessary to select, motivate, and relate to the people who are to carry

out the program within the framework set by the program philosophy, the budget, and the personnel policies.

Once the policies are established, the members are hired, and the children are enrolled, the function of the administrator parallels that of a classroom teacher. The administrator or director makes the total center program “go,” much as the teacher makes the classroom “go” after the learning environment has been set up. Evans suggests, “It is like leaping from one to another of a dozen different merry-go-rounds, each traveling at a different speed, each playing a different tune, and each blaring a separate cadence. Yet the administrator (*teacher*) must land gracefully, never missing a beat, always in perfect time with the music” (*italics added*).² Once the program is going, the function of the director becomes catalytic or facilitative. The total task of the director is then accomplished by creating an environment in which others may grow. Through the growth and development of staff members, the program is implemented and the program goals are reached; the process unfolds in much the same way as in the classroom, where the teacher attains the program goals through the growth and development of the children and their families.

CREATING A POSITIVE CLIMATE

As a leader, the director has the major responsibility for creating a climate of care, trust, and respect. This climate can best be achieved by demonstrating caring behavior, by taking steps to build a feeling of community or partnership, and by creating a climate for good communication among and between all members of the center community. The goal is to optimize the developmental potential of children, families and staff.

1 The terms *manager*, *director*, and *administrator* will be used interchangeably. All these terms refer to the person who is in charge of, and responsible for, the total program.

2 E. Belle Evans, *Day Care Administration*, Educational Day Care Services Association, Cambridge, MA, n.d., p. 2.

Modeling

The emotional tone at the center is set by the way the director feels about others and by the success with which those feelings are communicated to others in the setting. The director creates a climate of warmth, caring, and acceptance by relating to staff members, parents, and children with honesty and openness. Mutual trust and respect will grow in an environment in which respect is earned, and the best way to earn respect is to show respect for others.

Emotional stability, maturity, and a positive sense of self are the basic characteristics of a leader who has the potential for assuming responsibility and leading people in a caring manner. This leadership style creates a climate that, in turn, motivates others to imitate the pattern of acceptance and warmth in their interactions; the caring behaviors become contagious. Most of you have read about and observed "modeling" in young children. One child who is perceived as the leader displays a pattern of behavior, and others imitate it. Johnny says, "Yuk! Spinach!" and soon everyone at the table is saying such things as "Yuk, spinach!" "Slimy spinach!" "Yucky B. M. spinach!" However, if Johnny says, "Yummm, spinach!" other children are more likely to respond positively to the vegetable being served. Although this example is clearly an oversimplification of what typically happens in a group, behavior *is* contagious, and there is evidence that a leader who serves as the model does indeed control the behavioral climate of the setting.

Modeling begins with the very first encounter the director has with the new staff members as they come into the center for interviews, or when a newly hired director is introduced to the staff for the first time. The basic trust and mutual respect that are communicated and felt during this initial meeting are the building blocks for the relationships that will develop among the people in the center. The pattern established during these first meetings will set the stage for future meetings and will influence the ways in which staff members will interact

with one another and with the families and children who come to the center.

Although warmth, acceptance, and mutual respect are clearly fundamental to creating a favorable environment for the growth and development of the people involved in the center program, other behaviors demonstrated by successful directors also facilitate personal and professional growth and lead to more favorable environments for children. The director who shows intellectual curiosity and is always seeking more information to do a better job can inspire others to do the same. A leader who does not serve as a model of professional commitment and enthusiasm for learning more about children, families, human relationships, and trends and issues in early childhood cannot expect staff members to invest energy in these areas. The leader's responsibility is to show interest and enthusiasm for what is going on in the program and in the profession, and to serve as a resource for staff members and parents. They, in turn, will be stimulated to improve themselves as people and as caregivers³ of children.

Community Building

The director is responsible for developing and maintaining a sense of community among staff, parents, and children. Morale will be higher and the environment more conducive to growth for all involved if there is a "we" feeling—a feeling of belonging. As the feeling of belonging increases, anxiety, self-doubt, hostility, and feelings of rejection decrease.

Staff members who feel that it is *their* center and *their* program, who feel a sense of ownership about the program, will be more self-assured and more enthusiastic about assuming responsibility. They will not only perform the tasks they are competent to perform, but they will also be willing to invest energy into learning more so they can extend their area of responsibility. The total task of serving children and families becomes *our* task, and *we* provide the richest and

3 Caregiver is defined as "one who is responsive to the needs of children."