Blended Practices for Teaching Young Children in Inclusive Settings

Second Edition

by

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Blended Practices

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Significant movement toward states providing prekindergarten (pre-K) programs for children who are at risk has occurred since the first edition of this book was published in 2005. Combined with federal legislation mandating services for young children with disabilities and other special needs, as well as continued funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, that meant that inclusive preschool programs were becoming more common throughout the country. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, 42 states and the District of Columbia provided public preschool during the 2014–2015 school year. More than 1.4 million children attended state-funded preschool, with 5% of 3-year-olds and 29% of 4-year-olds enrolled in state-funded preschool (Barnett, 2016). In 2014–2015, 15.9% of 3-year-olds and 41.3% of 4-year-olds served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 (PL 108-446) received special education and related services in inclusive early childhood settings.

Additional federal initiatives have significantly increased funding for ensuring the quality of early childhood programs. President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (PL 111-5) into law, which had significant investments specifically for early care and education, including allocating funds to IDEA and serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with special needs. Funds were provided in the summer of 2011 for a competitive grant program called the Early Learning Challenge, which was part of the Race to the Top Initiative. The goal of this program was to support states to increase the number of children from low-income families or otherwise disadvantaged children who attend high-quality early childhood programs, implement a system of high-quality early childhood programs and services, and ensure that assessment use is in accordance with the National Research Council's recommendations specific to early childhood. Under the auspices of the Early Learning Challenge grant competition, more than $1 billion has been granted to projects in 20 states since 2011.

The Preschool Development Grants competition, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was created to help states build (development grants) or expand (expansion grants) high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities. Expansion grants can be used in concert with Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge grants. Five states were awarded development grants, and 13 states were awarded expansion grants in 2014 (year 1 of the grant), for a total of $226,419,228. These awards will allow more than 18,000 additional children to attend high-quality preschool programs. For example, Tennessee was awarded a $17.5 million expansion grant to create additional preschool seats for children in Shelby County (Memphis) and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

Early childhood Race to the Top funding as well as preschool expansion grants have focused on expanding access and quality to early childhood programs. In addition, state and federal governments are implementing systematic efforts to ensure that early childhood education (ECE)

programs demonstrate accountability for positive outcomes for young children. One example of this is the requirement that programs funded under IDEA for children ages birth to 5 years report children's progress toward three outcomes considered essential to children becoming active and successful participants in the settings in which they spend time—positive social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. Head Start has implemented a system for ensuring quality that requires grantees that are not meeting quality standards be reconsidered for future funding. Because of the emphasis on accountability and ensuring quality, preschool programs are increasingly being required to document that all children are making progress based on early care and education standards developed either by state governments or by federal programs.

The most recent federal initiative was launched with the publication of a policy statement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education—the Policy Statement on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (2015). The purpose of the statement was to

> set a vision and provide recommendations to states, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education, for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs (p. 1; 2015).

Furthermore, the policy statement acknowledges that all young children with disabilities should not only have access to high-quality inclusive settings, but they should also be provided with the individualized supports they need to meet high expectations. The policy statement specifically calls for the use of embedded instruction, scaffolding, and tiered models of instruction.

Great interest in how to deliver effective instruction to all children (including those with disabilities) has grown because many of the quality initiatives described previously have a focus on providing services in inclusive settings, including community-based programs, and improving social and preacademic outcomes of the children who attend these programs. The placement of children with disabilities in these programs does not ensure that they will reach high standards. The Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a joint position statement in 2009 in which they identified three defining features of inclusion—access, participation, and supports. Children with disabilities must be included in a preschool program and given effective instruction so they can reach high standards (Barton & Smith, 2015; DEC, 2014; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011; Schwartz, Sandall, Odom, Horn, & Beckman, 2002; Strain & Bovey, 2011). The purpose of this book is to integrate knowledge about effective practices for teaching children with and without disabilities into a comprehensive approach that ensures that all children in inclusive settings meet high standards.

CHANGES IN THE SECOND EDITION

In addition to state and federal policy and funding advances related to ECE, a significant amount of research has been published (DEC, 2014) since we wrote the first edition of this book. Although the overall curriculum framework of blended practices has not changed, we know more about how to plan for and implement instruction for children with a variety of learning needs in early childhood settings. These advances have influenced national policy statements and the development of current recommendation practices. NAEYC published a new statement on developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in 2009 (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In addition, DEC updated their recommended practices in 2014. Furthermore, the two organizations published a paper in collaboration with the National Head Start Association on frameworks for implementing a response to intervention (RTI) approach in early childhood programs. These advances in research and subsequent development of recommended practices influenced how we approached the second edition of this book.

Three major changes have been made in this edition. First, because of the essential role that assessment plays in blended practices, it was difficult to fully address assessment and instruction in the same text and do them both well. We made a decision to write a separate text on assessment that aligns with the blended practices instructional approach, titled *Assessing Young Children in Inclusive Settings: The Blended Practices Approach* (Grisham-Brown & Pretti-Frontczak, 2011), which contains a majority of the information on assessment that was in the first edition of this book. Second, there has been a great deal of work done in the area of multitiered systems of support (MTSS) for both behavior and academics (Buysse & Peisner-Feinberg, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011; Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2013; Snyder, Hemmeter, McLean, Sandall, & McLaughlin, 2013). This work has influenced our thinking about how to deliver instruction to all children in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, it has led us to think about how to integrate approaches to both instruction and behavioral support. We have organized the chapters in this edition using a tiered approach to instruction to address these issues. Finally, we have added chapters to this edition that address instructional issues related to outcomes in different subject areas. We specifically added chapters on teaching language, literacy, social-emotional skills, and math. These chapters have been added to address the current focus on ensuring that children are making progress in key preacademic domains, including social-emotional development.

TARGET AUDIENCES AND POSSIBLE USES FOR THIS BOOK

This book is designed for use in undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs in ECE and early childhood special education (ECSE), including those that simultaneously train teachers in both disciplines. It bridges the gap between ECE and ECSE by providing students with an integrated

approach for working with all young children. Students graduating from an ECE or ECSE program are likely to be teaching children with and without disabilities and will need information on how to integrate effective practices for all young children. In addition, the trend toward blended licensure makes this text an appealing addition to programs preparing personnel to work with children in inclusive settings. In addition, early childhood practitioners will find this book useful in their work with young children. Specifically, the information in this text will be useful to teachers as they attempt to address the wide range of needs of children with and without disabilities in their classrooms. Administrators and training and technical assistance providers will find the information helpful as they provide support to teachers around inclusive practices.

Although much of the information in this book will be relevant to the entire early childhood age range (birth to age 8), the needs of infants and toddlers are very different from those of preschoolers and children in early elementary grades. It would be difficult to address all of those needs in a single text, so this book focuses on children ages 2–5 and on programs that primarily serve children in center-based settings. The information, however, is relevant to a variety of settings, including child care, Head Start, and public school pre-K and kindergarten programs.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

One of the complicated tasks associated with blending ideas and practices is ensuring that the terminology used is understandable and acceptable to relevant audiences. Several key terms that are used throughout this book were carefully selected based on consideration of the different audiences and users. These terms are briefly described next, along with an explanation for why they were selected.

Blended practices: The fields of ECE and ECSE have traditionally approached education of young children from two different perspectives. ECE grew out of research on child development and has focused primarily on creating supportive environments that facilitate and enhance children's development. ECSE was strongly influenced by the field of special education and focuses primarily on individualized approaches to education that meet the unique needs of each child with a disability. A more unified or blended approach is needed as inclusive programs for young children with and without disabilities have emerged. This book evolved from the need to blend practices that are recommended for all children. Teachers need to understand practices that address the needs of all children, including those with disabilities, because of the increasing trend toward inclusive early childhood programs and the challenges to achieving meaningful inclusion. The term *blended practices* is used to refer to the integration of practices that can be used to address the needs of all children in inclusive settings. This is not to suggest that teachers will do the same thing for all children. This book describes how effective practices for addressing the needs of individual

children can be integrated so that all children can be meaningfully included in and benefit from the activities and routines of a classroom.

Inclusive programs: The goal of this book is to describe practices that can be used to address the needs of young children with and without disabilities in inclusive settings. Inclusive settings are those settings that are designed to address the needs of children who are typically developing, children who are at risk, and children with disabilities, including child care programs, public school pre-K and kindergarten programs, Head Start programs, and other center-based programs.

Teacher: A variety of terms, including *early childhood educator, interventionist, direct service provider, child care provider,* and *practitioner,* are used to describe the adults who work with young children. Teaching is one common role of adults, regardless of the setting in which the adults work or the type of children with whom the adults work. One has to develop positive and trusting relationships with children, attend to the individual needs of children, and support children in a way that promotes their individual development to be an effective teacher. These are the very things that all adults do when working with young children. Therefore, the term *teacher* will be used throughout this volume to refer to the adults who work with children, regardless of the setting or context in which they work.

HISTORICAL TRENDS

Early childhood inclusion has been greatly influenced by both research and legislation related to programs for young children who are typically developing, are at risk, or have disabilities. As the next section discusses, the roots of early childhood inclusion can be traced to the 1960s and the War on Poverty and were further strengthened by several key pieces of legislation.

Movement Toward Inclusive Programs

The history of inclusive preschool programs can be traced to a number of programs that began in the 1960s and 1970s. Head Start, which was signed into law in 1965, has been one of the most influential programs. Head Start was designed to be a comprehensive program for children and families living in poverty. In the early 1970s, as a result of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (PL 88-452), Head Start mandated that 10% of its slots would be reserved for children with disabilities. This was the first real commitment at the national level to preschool programs for children with and without disabilities. Concurrently, the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program was funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1968. This program funded the development and replication of model programs for young children with disabilities for more than 25 years. These model programs served as a context for much of the research on effective practices for young children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 (PL 94-142) provided incentives for states to serve preschool-age children

with disabilities. EHA also included a provision that children with disabilities should receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). *LRE* is defined as providing services to children with disabilities in settings that are as close as possible to the typical education environment and that meet the needs of the individual student. The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986 (PL 99-457), which amended EHA, created a mandate for states to serve children with disabilities ages 3–5 years and maintained the LRE provision. Subsequent amendments strengthened the LRE provision and changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (PL 101-476 and PL 105-17), which was then changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (PL 101-336) was another significant piece of legislation. The ADA had a direct impact on inclusion in child care centers in that it mandated that centers could not exclude children with disabilities unless a child's presence would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others or would require a fundamental alteration of the program. It also required the programs to make reasonable accommodations to both the facilities and their practices for children with disabilities.

National Association for the Education of Young Children/ Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood

Two major professional associations have been instrumental in identifying and disseminating information on effective practices for young children with and without disabilities. The NAEYC is the largest professional association of early childhood educators and others focused on improving the quality of programs for children from birth through age 8. The Council for Exceptional Children's DEC is for individuals who work with or on behalf of children with special needs from birth through age 8 and their families. The DEC is dedicated to promoting policies and practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of children.

The NAEYC's first set of guidelines on DAP described a framework for creating early childhood environments that address the developmental needs of young children (Bredekamp, 1987). Although not explicitly excluding children with disabilities, the guidelines were not specific about how practices might need to be adapted or modified to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. Early childhood special educators argued that although the DAP guidelines were necessary, they were not sufficient for programs that included young children with disabilities (Carta, Schwartz, Atwater, & McConnell, 1991). A positive outcome of these guidelines was the beginning of a dialogue between early childhood educators and early childhood special educators about how to best meet the needs of all young children in inclusive early childhood environments. As a result, the revised guidelines sought to address the needs of all young children, including those with disabilities, in a more comprehensive way (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997;

Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). As programs began to use the principles to guide their curriculum development and implementation, it became clear that the field needed more specific guidance about addressing the specialized needs of children with disabilities. The DEC developed a set of recommended practices for early intervention/ECSE based on an extensive review of the research in early childhood, ECSE, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other related disciplines (Odom & McLean, 1996). These practices were revised and expanded in 2000 (Sandall, McLean, & Smith, 2000), 2005 (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005), and again in 2014 (DEC, 2014). The revised practices are meant to build on the NAEYC DAP guidelines and are designed to describe specific strategies that can be used to provide individualized supports and services to young children with special needs and their families. The DEC recommended practices assume that all early childhood environments should be developmentally appropriate, and the practices provide guidance for how developmentally appropriate environments can be adapted and/or modified to ensure that children with disabilities are meaningfully included.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the DEC and the NAEYC have published a number of position statements and papers related to inclusive practices (DEC, NAEYC, & NHSA, 2013; DEC/NAEYC, 2009). The commitment to blended practices for addressing the needs of all young children in inclusive settings is clearly evident in these statements and demonstrates the work of these two organizations to deliver a common message. This work has led to a common understanding that a high-quality environment is the necessary foundation for inclusive programs, but individualized supports and strategies are needed to meet the unique needs of young children with disabilities (Bailey, McWilliam, Buysse, & Wesley, 1998; Buysse & Peisner-Feinberg, 2010; Horn, Thompson, Palmer, Jenson, & Turbiville, 2004; Odom et al., 2011; Wolery & Bredekamp, 1994). Developmentally appropriate learning environments provide a range of naturally occurring activities and routines that can be used as contexts for providing individualized instruction to children who have special learning needs (Horn, Lieber, Sandall, Schwartz, & Wolery, 2002; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004). Although there traditionally has been a focus on individualized instruction primarily for children with disabilities, this text is based on the idea that all children need access to instruction that is individualized based on each child's unique needs, learning style, interests, and background in order for all children to be successful and reach high standards.

Blending Teacher Preparation

Focusing on how teachers are prepared to work with young children in inclusive settings is an important outgrowth of the discussion about DAP. The vast majority of higher education personnel preparation programs prepared early childhood educators and early childhood special educators in separate programs at the same time that the field was emphasizing inclusive

programs and blended practices. In the early 1990s, the field began to focus on the importance of training early childhood educators to work with all children, which required higher education faculty to consider the philosophical differences between the fields of ECE and ECSE relative not only to the content of the training program but also to their own teaching practices and beliefs. In a seminal article, Miller (1992) questioned how teacher educators could advocate for inclusion at the service delivery level and maintain separate teacher education programs at the same time. A significant change in teacher education programs has occurred since the early 1990s. Many programs across the country now blend their ECE and ECSE training programs (Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005), and evidence shows that faculty are integrating more topics within personnel preparation programs (Bruder & Dunst, 2005). Furthermore, efforts have been made to more closely align personnel standards across ECE and ECSE (Chandler et al., 2012) and professional associations' personnel standards with state certification standards (Stayton, Smith, Dietrich, & Bruder, 2012).

In blended teacher education programs, faculty across disciplines co-teach courses, practicum requirements are completed in inclusive settings, and content is integrated into interdisciplinary coursework and practica. There is, however, a range of approaches to blended teacher education—in some programs, students from different departments complete coursework across departments, and in other programs, the content is blended across disciplines and students from multiple disciplines complete a program together. Data are limited on the outcomes of different types of personnel preparation programs. In fact, some have argued that the content related to special education is minimized by blending teacher education programs (across ECE and ECSE), resulting in teachers with limited expertise working with young children with the most significant disabilities. The purpose of this book is to help teachers understand how practices for children with disabilities can be blended with practices that are important for all children. Furthermore, we have highlighted the range of practices that will be needed to effectively address the needs of all children, including those with the most significant disabilities.

GUIDING THEMES

The preparation of this book was guided by six general themes about quality programs for young children—inclusion, multitiered approaches to instruction, families, diversity, outcomes, and collaboration and teaming. These themes are eloquently addressed in ethical statements, position statements, and recommended practice documents developed by the DEC and the NAEYC. These issues cut across the entire book. Talking about these issues here and referring to them throughout the book conveys their importance in providing quality services to young children in inclusive settings. Although these themes have empirical support, they are also fundamental tenets of the field about quality programs for young children.

Inclusion

This book is based on the field's commitment to inclusive programs for children with and without disabilities. A wealth of research supports inclusion in terms of outcomes for children with and without disabilities as well as broader effects on families and communities (e.g., Barton & Smith, 2015; Guralnick, 2001; Odom, 2002; Odom et al., 2011). As mentioned previously, federal, state, and local policies also reflect a commitment to ensuring that children with disabilities have access to inclusive settings. In addition to efficacy data and policy, there is a fundamental commitment in the field of ECE and ECSE to inclusive programs, which is reflected in policy statements developed by national early childhood organizations.

Multitiered Systems of Support

This book reflects the work on multitiered systems of support (MTSS), which is a data-driven approach for supporting the academic and behavioral outcomes of all children. An MTSS approach uses ongoing screening and assessment to determine the individual needs of all children and provides the level of support and instruction that children need based on that assessment information.

Families

Given the importance of families, both in the lives of young children and their role in working with professionals to design, implement, and evaluate their children's programs, information about families is included across chapters as well as in Chapter 8, which is focused on teaming. Recommended practices in ECE and ECSE have long advocated for families to be actively included in early childhood programs (e.g., Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; DEC, 2014; Sandall et al., 2005).

Family involvement seems especially important for young children because it is in the context of interactions with their families and other significant caregivers that children develop the social-emotional competencies that are critical for their ongoing success in school and life. The family provides a base of support over time that helps children navigate transitions and life events. The early childhood years are an important time in terms of supporting families as they learn about their children's education and social systems. This book focuses on how to involve families in early childhood programs so that the involvement promotes parents' confidence and competence in supporting their children's development and success. In much the same way that it is important to individualize for children, it is important to individualize family involvement based on the unique needs, values, beliefs, and desires of each family.

Diversity

The focus of this book is on strategies teachers can use to meet the diverse needs of all children in inclusive settings. The population of children being

served in center-based programs is not only growing in number but also becoming increasingly diverse in ability levels and cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Four key principles related to meeting the diverse needs of children and families provide a foundation for implementing the practices discussed throughout this book. First, promoting diversity in inclusive programs requires support and commitment from all levels, including teaching staff, administration, and families. Second, personnel preparation programs should promote and support professionals as they engage in an ongoing process to develop cross-cultural competence. It is not something teachers can learn by reading a book or taking a class. Third, it is important for teachers and other professionals to honor the diverse beliefs, lifestyles, languages, and values of children and families while at the same time providing children and families with the knowledge and supports they need to be successful in a variety of environments and contexts. Finally, it will be important for teachers to identify, use, and evaluate resources and strategies that are culturally, developmentally, and linguistically appropriate for all children, families, and professionals to effectively address the needs of all children in inclusive settings. These guiding principles are entirely consistent with position statements from national professional associations as well as recommended practices in the field. As previously indicated, these principles are relevant to all of the practices described in the book. Although highlighted here, the principles will be addressed in both content and examples throughout this text.

Outcomes

Documenting that programs are resulting in positive outcomes for children and families is an important issue in education. Outcomes include social-emotional outcomes such as problem solving, ability to communicate emotions, persistence with tasks, and ability to develop relationships with peers, as well as preacademic skills such as knowledge about books and print, early indicators of phonological awareness, and knowledge and understanding of numbers. Although measuring outcomes is most prevalent in K–12 education, many states are including preschool children in accountability systems. All states now have a set of early learning guidelines. There has been a great deal of controversy in the field about including young children in accountability systems. This controversy reflects concerns about the appropriateness of and difficulty in assessing young children. Although many in the field of early childhood are reluctant to move in this direction, it is important to be proactive both in terms of identifying outcomes and assessing children's progress on those outcomes. The important piece of this is ensuring that the outcomes, the teaching approaches for addressing the outcomes, and the processes that will be used to assess children's progress toward the outcomes are all developmentally appropriate. These issues will be central to the information presented in this book.

Collaboration and Teaming

Collaboration is essential to effectively address the diverse needs of young children in inclusive settings and their families. Meeting the diverse needs of children with and without disabilities will require a variety of services and supports that range in form and intensity depending on the needs of the children. The diverse and complex range of services that likely are needed will require both coordination and collaboration among professionals and with families. Although this book focuses primarily on strategies teachers and staff use on a daily basis in classrooms, teaming with professionals from other disciplines and with families will be critical in terms of identifying children's needs, developing individualized plans, and providing and evaluating services and interventions. Collaboration among professionals and families increases the likelihood that services will be coordinated and integrated. Finally, the relationship among classroom staff, visitors, and volunteers is a critical aspect of collaboration.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Given the increasing emphasis on child outcomes and the complexity of addressing the needs of children with a wide range of abilities, the authors of this book are advocating the use of a curriculum framework (described in detail in Chapter 2) that links assessment and instruction and provides guidance about how to differentiate instruction in blended classrooms. The curriculum framework is composed of four elements, including assessment, scope and sequence, activities and instruction, and progress monitoring (Grisham-Brown, Hemmeter, & Pretti-Frontczak, 2005). As previously mentioned, information about assessment and progress monitoring are detailed in Grisham-Brown and Pretti-Frontczak (2011). This text will focus on the scope and sequence and activities and instruction elements of the curriculum framework. The book is divided into three main sections, which are described next.

Section I: Setting the Stage for Blended Practices

This section includes this introductory chapter and three additional chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the curriculum framework, which offers a structure for the remaining chapters. The curriculum framework is composed of four elements—assessment, scope and sequence, activities and intervention strategies, and progress monitoring. In addition, this chapter addresses the blending or unification of various theories or perspectives when working in programs for children with and without disabilities and provides examples of different curricular approaches in which blended practices can be implemented. Finally, this chapter provides an introduction to multitiered approaches to instruction. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the types of child outcomes that may be addressed at each tier of instruction. Chapter 4 provides more information on multitiered models of

instruction with a focus on practices that cut across tiers and guidelines for implementing multitiered models of instruction. The chapter includes a discussion of practices that are foundational to implementing tiered models.

Section II: Tiered Instruction

Chapters 5–7 provide more detailed information about each tier of instruction. The types and characteristics of instruction that are implemented at each tier are described in these chapters. Each of the chapters includes information on how to implement instruction at each tier as well as information about how to plan for that instruction and practical examples of what instruction might look like within that tier.

Section III: Special Considerations in the Application of Blended Practices

Chapter 8 focuses on teaming with professionals from a range of disciplines and families. This chapter addresses the importance of collaborative partnerships when implementing blended practices. Finally, Chapters 9–12 discuss blending practices to promote outcomes from specific preacademic domains, including social-emotional, language, literacy, and math. These chapters include information about specific outcomes related to the domain as well as teaching strategies and approaches that have been specifically used to address outcomes from each domain.

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