

Lewin-Benham, A. 2010. *Infants and Toddlers at Work: Using Reggio-Inspired Materials to Support Brain Development*. New York: Teachers College Press. 180 pp. ISBN 9780807751077. \$27.95.

Babies' brains are wired to help them understand and connect with language, numbers, space, objects, and people in their environment. Throughout life the brain rewires itself in response to experience. In this work, the author presents a well-articulated and extraordinarily detailed summary of the latest discoveries about the development of the brain in the first three years of life and the implications for infant/toddler teachers.

The book's premise is that materials play a pivotal role in stimulating development even during the first weeks and months of infancy. Lewin-Benham demonstrates how infant/toddler teachers can frame their own interactions and structure beginning explorations with materials to support each child's unique responses and burgeoning capacities. Richly illustrated by examples from Reggio-inspired early education settings, the text presents fresh approaches and engaging activities with clay, paint, man-made objects, drawing tools and paper, natural materials from the outdoors, and light and shadow. A wealth of information and specific suggestions for creating learning environments that capitalize on current knowledge make this an invaluable guide for practitioners and teacher educators.

Meier, D., B.S. Engel, & B. Taylor. 2010. *Playing for Keeps: Life and Learning on a Public School Playground*. New York: Teachers College Press. 127 pp. ISBN 9780807750957. \$19.95.

Many elementary school children spend their days in tightly structured classrooms framed by tests and their evenings in front of televisions and computers, experiencing a created world when they barely have had a chance to explore the real one firsthand. This book illustrates the vital contribution of unstructured outdoor play during the school day to children's emotional, physical, intellectual, and social health and learning.

The authors' wise commentary and vivid vignettes capture in detail the children's lives on the playground—their delight as they explore; invent games; share ideas, materials, and relationships; and connect to the classroom curriculum. The vignettes show how play supports the educational goals of the school, such as helping children develop the kind of independent thinking they need for finding creative alternatives to complex problems that the world—and soon they themselves—must face.

The authors communicate how the social and physical context of the playground enables free exploration and high-quality play. They demonstrate the process of creating an ethical and safe setting and cultivating a civil society on the playground. They show adults who value children's own ways of rule making and solving difficult social issues that arise, as together the adults and the children establish agreement on rules and mutual respect. Instead of the usual blacktop crowded with commercial equipment, the playground's grass, trees, dirt, hill, brick wall for ball play, and dead beech tree with sprawling branches lying on the ground invite the children to climb, create games and drama, and initiate long-term investigations of nature. This book makes a convincing case for urgently needed, unstructured outdoor play in elementary education.

Neuman, S.B., & M. Kamil, eds. 2010. *Preparing Teachers for the Early Childhood Classroom: Proven Models and Key Principles*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes. 256 pp. ISBN 9781598570816. \$39.95.

What constitutes good professional development for early childhood educators? This volume provides insight into what is working. Contributors combine a thoughtful analysis of the emerging body of research on early childhood professional development and the findings from a group of programs focused on literacy training and in the process reveal a set of promising practices common to both the research data and the experiences of programs. From eight successful programs receiving Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Program grants from the U.S. Department of Education, researchers and administrators present guidelines and research-based solutions that professional development organizations and policy makers can use to improve practice-based training. They discuss the strategies used to address the challenges of supporting a diverse early childhood workforce as the field moves from a culture of compliance with minimal requirements to a culture of professionalism and evidence-based practice. The content includes topics such as optimal frequency and length of training, appropriate monitoring to assure the fidelity of program implementation, and techniques for engaging and sustaining participation in training.

The text provides specific evidence and methodologies used to enhance teacher quality in a variety of professional development programs. They include a model of coaching that has shown enormous promise for nontraditional learners; an infant/toddler teacher-mentoring program that adapted to the mentees' changing knowledge and practice; a community-college program that revised its strategies to overcome institutional and personal barriers to successful participation in training often experienced by the nontraditional early childhood student; an action research project to evaluate the success of community-based professional development initiatives; and a coaching program that developed online coaching logs to provide real-time feedback to monitor the success of the professional development programs. In the conclusion, the authors highlight what has been learned from research and what we need to learn from future research to determine the most effective strategies and models that can optimize early childhood professional development efforts.

California Department of Education & WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies. 2009. *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*. Sacramento: California Department of Education. 110 pp. ISBN 9780801116933. \$17.95. www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/itfoundations2009.pdf

This guide provides insight into the key competencies that infants and toddlers typically attain in the first three years of life. It is a training tool developed by the California Department of Education and WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies as part of a statewide effort to strengthen early learning and development through high-quality infant/toddler programs.

Drawing from current research and the expertise of infant/

Titles are selected from the many new books received by NAEYC. Educator **Gail Perry** writes the brief annotations. The books are available from the publishers listed, your local bookstore, or online retailers.

New Books is available in an online archive at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

toddler teachers, the authors describe 28 competencies, such as emotional regulation and cause-and-effect thinking, and how these are learned and developed during a child's first three years. Narrative accounts capture the unique ways in which children become active participants in their own learning. Charts with concise definitions of each competency are illustrated by diverse examples of infants and toddlers at 8, 18, and 36 months and by the ongoing changes leading up to these three pivotal development stages. The short, readable explanations, inviting format, and enchanting photos help make this an excellent professional development tool for directors and teacher educators.

A high-quality companion book, *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines*, offers recommendations for program policies and day-to-day practices. An engaging 3-disc DVD illustrates the 28 competencies in action at infant/toddler centers. Both resources are available from the California Department of Education.

Roffman, L., & T. Wanerman, with C. Britton. 2011. *Including One, Including All. A Guide to Relationship-Based Early Childhood Education*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf. 257 pp. ISBN 9781605540139. \$39.95.

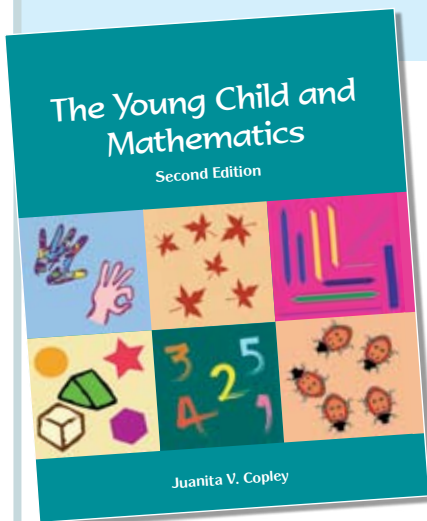
In one of the most promising books on early childhood inclusion to appear in a long time, the authors present a new way of thinking about and approaching inclusive education. Books

about inclusion frequently describe teaching approaches that only an intervention specialist can implement. This approach, developed in a mainstream preschool classroom by a teacher who studied the basics of quality early childhood education, consists of strategies that will enrich a teachers' everyday interactions with all children and families. It is based on the idea that meeting the needs of children with autism or Down syndrome, for example, involves first understanding who they are as individuals.

The authors describe how to engage with children to discover and nurture the internal resources each child brings to relationships with teachers and peers. The process helps teachers see unique ways to foster connections between children and to create a community of inclusion in the classroom and among teachers as an alternative to the psychological separation that frequently occurs between children. Photo sequences and descriptions of teachers using inclusive strategies bring to life the philosophy and steps of this approach. They include, for example, techniques for developing a child's sensory integration profile and for understanding a child's unique approach to self-regulation and the ways a child can calm herself when overstimulated.

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