

**Banning, W., & G. Sullivan. 2011. *Lens on Outdoor Learning*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf. 207 pp. ISBN 9781605540245. \$49.95.**

The outdoors comes with its own curriculum content in place, embedded in the children's interactions with natural systems, plant and animal life, and an endless variety of materials, challenges, and seasonal changes. This exciting portrait of the education of 3- to 5-year-old children in urban and rural settings provides practical guidance and inspiration to help programs capitalize on the unique potential of learning outdoors. The authors show teachers and administrators how to connect with early learning standards when using the natural world to promote children's competency in taking initiative, persisting at tasks, solving problems, developing resilience and flexibility, and for other areas.

Enchanting color photographs enhance the compelling narratives of children's learning as they reflect on their interactions with the environment, construct theories about meaning based on their past experiences, and test out their theories in their next interaction. These vignettes capture the children's role in their own learning process. The stories provide a model to help teachers reflect on the learning process and analyze what children are actually doing, so they can help the children refine and extend the approaches they are using. The text includes suggestions for designing the play yard and enriching the curriculum.

While focused on learning outdoors, this book is also a child development primer. The authors' insightful commentary on how young children develop and learn will strengthen teaching inside the classroom as well.

**Castro, D.C., B. Ayankoya, & C. Kasprzak. 2011. *The New Voices / Nuevas Voces Guide to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Early Childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes. 166 pp. ISBN 9781598570465. \$34.95.**

The authors bring extensive experience as researchers and trainers in second language learning to help early childhood educators develop culturally appropriate programs. The strength of this book is the wealth of pertinent information it provides about specific beliefs and practices that will enable administrators and teachers to understand families' cultural perspectives and foster a positive cultural identity for each child. The authors describe misconceptions about cultural belief systems and childrearing practices that often create barriers to building relationships with families and children.

This guide provides an in-depth picture of how second language learning unfolds and the ways that diverse cultural meanings influence such areas as the roles of family members, communication patterns, and affective styles. Although the text defines broad concepts that apply to all ethnic groups, this guide is focused on the largest minority in the United States—Latinos from Mexico, South and Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Heartfelt stories of immigrants, recorded in both Spanish and English, communicate cultural diversity in action and the way it affects classroom practices.

This book is well suited for use in college courses and professional development training. Its five modules include practical tools like the Diversity Self-Assessment Scale and an extensive

list of readings, videotapes, and web resources. Each module includes professional development activities to help participants reflect on and implement the ideas.

**Hall, E.L., & J.K. Rudkin. 2010. *Seen and Heard: Children's Rights in Early Childhood Education*. New York: Teachers College Press. 144 pp. ISBN 9780807751602. \$24.95.**

This short yet powerful book opens up a different way of understanding the roles young children play in their social environments and the implications for early childhood practice. The authors examine the meaning and status of children's rights in a comprehensive and scholarly review of the theories and research of multidisciplinary experts. They make a strong case for children's right to participate in the communities in which they live. Using examples from past struggles for the rights of African Americans, women, and persons with disabilities, the authors show that young children are often marginalized, oppressed, or portrayed negatively. For example, terms like *childish* imply something is inferior or immature.

The meaning of the text comes to life through the voices, actions, and ideas of the infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and teachers at Hall's Reggio-inspired school where children's rights are translated into practice. Vignettes from staff and children help illustrate strategies for using the physical space, class projects, and social community to support children's rights in the curriculum. The book demonstrates how to use teacher-child dialogue to give children a voice in issues that affect them, involving children in thinking about and using their rights.

Many examples in the text will inspire teachers to reflect deeply on their own work and the challenges of achieving social justice for children while striving to balance the perspectives of children and adults. For example, adults tend to be future oriented, hurrying to the next item on the schedule. Children are in the present, existing in the moment. Classroom conversations can be rich for children when they focus on what is salient now. Teachers must be sure that measures meant to protect children (in the name of safety) do not prevent children from participating in the life of the center and the wider community.

**Howes, C., & R.C. Pianta, eds. 2010. *Foundations for Teaching Excellence: Connecting Early Childhood Quality Rating, Professional Development, and Competency Systems in States*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes. 180 pp. ISBN 9781598571226. \$34.95.**

This is a state-of-the-art examination of recent efforts to improve the quality of early childhood programs. States launched new professional development systems and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) in response to rising national concerns about quality. They renewed their efforts to reach consensus on the knowledge and skills required for competent teachers. The professional development systems include the requirements and processes by which states determine who is qualified to teach and the formal, informal and mentoring preparation experiences states offer. QRIS

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.

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focus on ways to monitor quality and provide accountability, strategies to engage and support programs and practitioners, standards for practice, financing for incentives and services, and communication with families and consumers. These quality improvement initiatives have developed and often operate independently of one another.

This second book in a series by the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education focuses on the progress states have made in integrating these initiatives to form a more cohesive and effective system to help practitioners become professionally competent. Renowned early childhood leaders and researchers review the research, summarize current developments, and recommend ways to address the needs of highly diverse programs and teaching populations. Detailed examples show how six states have begun to align their policies and practices and maximize limited resources.

This information-packed volume includes topics such as problems of and potential solutions for defining and measuring professional development and classroom quality, plus ways to monitor and sustain quality over time. One notable chapter provides a rich description of the historical roots of the policies and standards for early childhood teachers and current challenges and opportunities to unify standards and competencies.

Early childhood decision makers will find this book to be an invaluable reference as they determine how to move the field forward in the next decade.

**Kagan, S.L., & K. Tarrant, eds. 2010. *Transitions for Young Children: Creating Connections across Early Childhood Systems*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes. 340 pp. ISBN 9781598570830. \$39.95.**

The authors present a new way of thinking about the transitions that children experience in the first eight years of life,

a perspective that has key implications for the profession. Early childhood scholars and researchers discuss the complex role of transitions in children's lives and demonstrate how transitions are deeply embedded throughout the field from practice to policy. The authors show how the decades-long disconnection between key players, programs, institutions, and policies overwhelms a fragile support system for children. They describe how families, schools, teachers, communities, and governments can create meaningful transitions for children as they undergo rapid developmental changes from infancy through primary grades. In this time, children move between many relationships with different adults and peers in diverse settings—home, child care, school, and neighborhood (often in one day). They must negotiate the demographic, technological, and other changes in these multiple environments.

Chapters cover a wide range of topics from designing elementary schools to be ready to serve young children to an examination of the characteristics of neighborhoods that contribute to or interfere with children's well-being, such as racial integration, environmental toxins, and local social networks. The authors discuss strategies to support continuity in children's lives such as ways families can help children navigate transitions and ways government can provide structures and develop policies to support successful transitions. Each chapter includes initiatives that demonstrate promising alignment approaches.

This book revolutionizes not only the way we think about transitions for young children, but also our vision of next steps for early childhood education.

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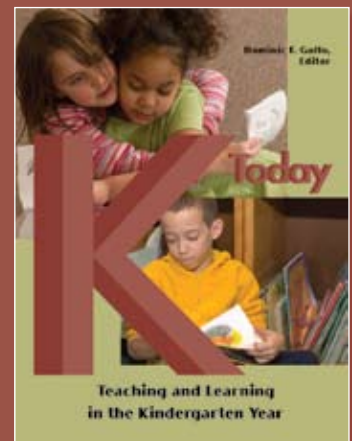
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