E-Professionalism
Gender Stereotypes
Family Involvement
Healthy Foods

Dimensions of Early Childhood
Volume 39, Number 3, 2011
63rd Annual SECA Conference

Hyatt Regency San Antonio
February 2 - 4 2012

Featured Keynote Speakers:
Greg Johnson, Chef and Father
Dr. Michael H. Levine, Ph.D.
Sharon MacDonald
Dr. Pam Schiller
Representative Mike Villareal

Laying the Foundation for Lifelong Learning

Featured Sessions by:
Dr. Debby Cryer, Ph.D.
and
Nature Explore

Find out more at:
E-Professionalism for Early Care and Education Providers
Helene Arbouet Harte

Why Does Gender Matter?
Counteracting Stereotypes With Young Children
Olaiya E. Aina and Petronella A. Cameron

Accessible Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programs
Johnetta W. Morrison, Pamela Storey, and Chenyi Zhang

Prepare Healthy Foods With Toddlers
Satomi Izumi-Taylor and Cheryl Rike

President’s Message
Janie Humphries
A person recently asked me an interesting question about the Southern Early Childhood Association. He asked, “What was the best thing about serving as President of SECA?” This is my answer. I have several best things:

- The SECA Board members with whom I have worked. I appreciated and enjoyed the members who helped and assisted me when I was a new president and the members who have recently been elected and have joined the board with eagerness and enthusiasm. The Board members were great at working and laughing together. Each group created a great SECA Board and each member will be a great Fossil member.

- The group of state presidents with whom I have been blessed to serve…their interests, their willingness to be flexible, their friendliness, and their desire to do what is best for the children and families in their state and their state members. To have the opportunity to work with each of the state presidents during my term has been very special. I appreciate the hospitality and the level of achievement I experienced at each state conference I attended during the past 2 years.

- The SECA professional staff, Glenda, Megan, and Maurena. I have been blessed by their professionalism, their friendship, and their ability to do an exceptional amount of work. Their skill at keeping me informed; staying on task; correcting my mistakes, especially spelling errors; and their willingness to add one more thing to their schedule during hectic times has been greatly appreciated.

- The opportunity to attend state conferences and meet SECA members and future SECA members. I enjoyed visiting with them about their jobs, their joys in working with children, and their frustrations in how much more needs to be done in the field of early childhood. I learned how much SECA members are alike throughout the South and how much they care for the children and families of the South and for the people who work in the field of early childhood.

- The opportunity to represent and speak for and about the Southern Early Childhood Association. I have been privileged to represent SECA at many professional organizations and to speak with state and national leaders.

These have all been some of best things of being SECA President.

Being SECA President has been an experience of a lifetime, and I thank each of you for what you have added to that experience. I hope you realize what a special professional organization SECA is and what exceptional people belong to and work with SECA.

I want to give a special thanks to Georgia Lamirand, SECA Past President, who was especially thoughtful and helpful during my year as President-Elect. Thanks also goes to the Louisiana Early Childhood Association Board and members who encouraged me to run for the office of President and who have encouraged and supported me during my term as SECA President.

I look forward to becoming Past-President, to supporting and working with Nancy Cheshire, the incoming SECA President, and to maintaining the wonderful friendships I have experienced as SECA President. Yes, there have been many best things about serving as SECA President.
E-Professionalism for Early Care and Education Providers

Wondering how to use technology in a more professional manner? Follow these recommendations to make wise choices with electronic media use.

Helene Arbouet Harte

Teachers of young children work hard to be professional and to be viewed by others as professionals. These efforts to maintain professionalism must include e-professionalism. E-professionalism involves behavior related to professional standards and ethics when using electronic communication (Evans & Gerwitz, 2008).

Cellular telephones, social networking sites, video-sharing sites, online forums, electronic mail (email), wikis, blogs, and a range of Web 2.0 technologies allow for sharing of personal and professional information in a variety of ways with an extended audience. With any of these forms of communication, it is important to consider professionalism and what it entails.

Unprofessional incidents dealing with social media have influenced the public perception of certain professions, including educators, lawyers, and doctors (Greyser, Kind, & Chretien, 2010). While social media, such as Facebook, may be the focus of some less-than-professional episodes, simple daily communications through electronic mail must also be handled with the utmost professionalism (see sidebar for an example).

Email allows for nearly instantaneous sharing of information and documents. It has enhanced and expanded opportunities for efficient and immediate communication. Both personal and professional emails can easily be forwarded to people other than the intended recipient and can go viral almost instantly. After the information is out there, it cannot be retrieved (Carter, Foulger, & Ewbank, 2008). Double check before sending every email message to ensure it is

- professional,
- free of errors, and
- is going only to the intended recipient(s).

One Click Undoes Years of Professionalism

Miss Christine arrived home after an exhausting day of teaching. She had several challenges in her classroom, including Kevin. After a recent meeting with his mother and learning more about social-emotional development and challenging behaviors, things seemed to be going better.

Today she had many positive interactions with Kevin. He did not hit, spit, bite, swear, or run in the classroom. Miss Christine read books about emotions with the class, used music and finger plays to smooth transitions, and built on Kevin’s interest in animals to keep him engaged. Before circle time, she read a story about the expectations for behavior in circle time, and Kevin participated actively. Later, when Kevin drew on the window with a marker, the logical consequence was to have him to clean it off. She then redirected him to the easel and sat with him as he filled the paper.

Happy and tired, Miss Christine sat down at her computer to check her email. She thought about contacting Kevin’s mom to let her know about how hard he worked. Instead, she found an email from Kevin’s mom. She complained that her son told her he cleaned the windows in the classroom. She felt that was inappropriate because he is not a custodian, but this task had reflected the teacher’s expectations of her son. Kevin’s mom then accused Miss Christine of mistreating her son.

Miss Christine was devastated. She thought the day had gone so well. She also noticed that her director was copied on the email. Frustrated, she forwarded the email to several friends and co-workers, including an introduction in which she insulted Kevin’s mother. She then logged on to Facebook and updated her status: “Parents of children at Cheery Child Care are awful and ungrateful. They drive me crazy!”

After a couple of hours, Miss Christine calmed down and thought about contacting Kevin’s mother to explain what happened at school. Unfortunately, the forwarded email already made its way back to several parents of children in her class. Her center director was not happy about the Facebook posting.

While Miss Christine had worked so hard to be a reflective practitioner, furthering her professional development, and collaborating with families, in her anger she had unintentionally undone much of what she had worked so hard to do. Years of professionalism were erased by a few moments of unprofessionalism.
These simple steps may also prevent mistakes such as hitting “reply to all,” especially when it is not desired (Evans & Gerwitz, 2008). Professionals are urged to be very conscious of what they send and to whom. In addition to communication via email, there are a variety of ways to communicate and connect online, all of which must be handled with professionalism by early childhood educators.

**Benefits and Challenges of Technology**

Teachers sometimes use Web sites to enhance school programs, share information, provide a forum for students, or improve their own professional development (Carter, Foulger & Ewbank, 2008). Professional organizations often provide online opportunities for members to engage in discussions or network with other members.

Teachers of young children may also use professional online networking sites such as LinkedIn, which allow individuals to post resumes and connect with others in their field to extend a job search or obtain information, for example.

Social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, allow participants to connect, maintain contact, and communicate with others (Cain, 2008). Members can share comments, videos, and photographs. Unfortunately, some users do not establish privacy settings, resulting in access by unintended audiences outside of their peer group, such as future employers. These unanticipated viewers may well have different norms and expectations and may misinterpret the content posted (Cain, 2008).

**Balance the benefits of social networking with its disadvantages.**

The benefits of social networking must be balanced with its disadvantages. Negative consequences can result when inappropriate postings are identified, such as denial of a degree for students, disciplinary actions, or job loss, and convey a negative reflection on a profession overall (Carter, Foulger & Ewbank, 2008; Foulger, Ewbank, Kay, Popp, & Carter, 2009; Manning, 2010).

Sometimes even more than a lapse in professionalism in person, a lack of professionalism displayed online can result in negative consequences for the individual and the profession overall, because each posting leaves behind a “digital footprint” visible to a wide audience (Greysen, Kind, & Chretien, 2010). Social networking sites can serve as a mirror, reflecting both the best and the worst for all to see (Greysen, Kind, & Chretien, 2010).

Email allows for nearly instantaneous sharing of information and documents. It has enhanced and expanded opportunities for efficient and immediate communication.
Whether the forum is a professional networking site or a social networking site, users are urged to carefully consider what information and photographs are available to others. Teachers of young children should reflect on their responsibilities as professionals before posting anything.

**Professional Responsibilities**

Professional responsibilities apply to every online persona (Cain, 2008). Posting careless comments and questionable images online can magnify less-than-professional behavior. While individuals in the United States have freedom of expression, this may sometimes conflict with another person’s right to privacy and can breach confidentiality. For example, if a message contains the name of a school, it may imply the school condones the opinions or images presented (Farnan et al., 2009).

The rules that apply to face-to-face professional relationships also apply online. These rules are grounded in trust and respect (Farnan et al., 2009). Teachers may find it helpful to be proactive, engaging in a dialogue with colleagues about the risks of posting online and exploring ethical dilemmas specific to social networking (Foulger et al., 2009). Considering the challenges that are inherent in participation in social networking, some teachers choose not to participate at all.

Lack of participation online may not be the answer for everyone, however. Pre-service teachers who were cautioned against participation struggled with feelings of isolation versus fear of the consequences of participation (Kist, 2008). The lines between personal and professional lives can easily be blurred. Teachers must constantly make informed decisions about what to share and how, weighing the benefits and risks, with an awareness of professional responsibilities (Carter, Foulger & Ewbank, 2008; Manning, 2010).

**Ethical Responsibilities**

Early childhood professionals make a commitment to the standards of the profession, its code of ethics, and the profession overall (Castle, 2009). For teachers of young children, this commitment to the practice of professionalism begins with utilizing the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct as a resource for developing professional partnerships with families and colleagues as well as trusting, respectful relationships with young children (NAEYC, 2005).

**Families, Children, and Colleagues**

Professionalism is a lifelong process that involves enhancing knowledge and skills while managing ethical responsibilities to children, families, colleagues, employers, and society (Castle, 2009). As professionals, teachers must be diligent in their efforts to be competent practitioners as well as dedicated to adhering to ethical guidelines. In any of early childhood’s diverse roles—child care...
providers; family child care providers; public or private preschool teachers; primary school teachers; and students or faculty in higher education—two resources serve as guides in making decisions as professionals:

- NAEYC’s Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Guidelines (2009) and

According to DAP guidelines, effective teachers are skilled decision makers (NAEYC, 2009). Systematic reflection enables teachers to make informed decisions about a variety of topics and strategies (Castle, 2009). Decisions made about online practices ought to involve the same depth of reflection as other professional topics. These choices are not to be taken lightly.

Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines call for teachers to create caring communities of learners in which they model responsibility in communication with colleagues and families (NAEYC, 2009). Connecting families to resources as well as engaging in frequent two-way communication are also important components of developmentally appropriate practice. All of these interactions should involve mutual respect with families as partners (NAEYC, 2009).

Electronic resources and communications can be part of facilitating this community of learners. Use of media must be guided by the same standards as other areas of professional practice. Among the core values of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct are “relationships based on trust and respect” and respect for the “dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual.” Avoid making any statements or postings online that violate those core values.

Among educators’ ethical responsibilities to children is the need to avoid any harm, including doing or saying anything that may be disrespectful. Status updates on a social networking site can unwittingly reveal unprofessional attitudes. For example, one educator posted comments stating she was not looking forward to another school year. She referred to her students as “germ bags.” Although she was joking, thought her statements were private, and never intended for students or parents to see her post, they did see them, and she was asked to resign (CBS, 2010).

A teacher’s ethical responsibility to families and co-workers is to maintain confidentiality and respect everyone’s privacy. Comments and photographs posted online violate this ethical tenet.

For co-workers, one principle is particularly relevant to what is posted online: “P-3A.1—We shall recognize the contributions of colleagues to our program and not participate in practices that diminish their reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families” (NAEYC, 2005).

Before sharing information or pictures, ask if the content will affect any colleague’s reputation. Much of what teachers do to ensure professionalism online deals with one’s own professional reputations. But the professional reputation of co-workers can also be tarnished by decisions about what to include on a social networking site.

A similar guideline exists for teachers’ responsibilities to employers. “I-3B.2—To do nothing that diminishes the reputation of the program in which we work unless it is violating laws and regulations designed to protect children or is violating the provisions of this Code” (NAEYC, 2005).
### Table 1. Ethics and E-Professionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Guideline</th>
<th>Examples of E-Professionalism</th>
<th>Examples of the Absence of E-Professionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities to Children</strong>&lt;br&gt;“P-1.1—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.” (NAEYC, 2005)</td>
<td>Kim takes pictures of children in her class on a field trip. She has permission from all parents before taking pictures. She uses the photos for portfolio assessment and documentation panels. She uses a photo-sharing site that requires a login to share photos with families of children in her class. Any comments included describe children’s learning.</td>
<td>Kim has a page on a social networking site that is open to the public. She posts pictures of children in her class, wearing T-shirts with the name of the school on it, on a field trip. She makes comments under each photo, some of which mock the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities to Families</strong>&lt;br&gt;“P-2.11—We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness working with their children.” (NAEYC, 2005)</td>
<td>In an effort to communicate with families frequently and in a variety of ways, Taneka asks parents for their preferred methods of communication. For those who choose to provide email addresses, Taneka uses email to send classroom updates and positive messages about children to families. She does not send any confidential information or forward any emails.</td>
<td>Taneka asks all families of children in her class for email addresses. She emails solicitations for sales for her other job, selling cosmetics and jewelry. She also uses the email addresses to search for families on social networking sites and asks them to connect with her there as a “friend”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities to Co-workers</strong>&lt;br&gt;“P-3A.1—We shall recognize the contributions of colleagues to our program and not participate in practices that diminish their reputations or impair their effectiveness in working with children and families.” (NAEYC, 2005)</td>
<td>After a fun evening out with a co-worker, Sally waits until the next day to ask before posting ANY pictures on her social networking site. She avoids any photos or comments that could in any way damage her own or her co-worker’s reputation.</td>
<td>Sally does not consider her co-worker’s reputations. Immediately after arriving home from a night out with co-workers, Sally posts pictures and comments on her social networking site, “Miss Betty sure knows how to party!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities to Employers</strong>&lt;br&gt;“P-3B.1—We shall follow all program policies. When we do not agree with program policies, we shall attempt to effect change through constructive action within the organization.” (NAEYC, 2005)</td>
<td>Michelle is concerned about practices she observes that seem inconsistent with the program’s stated philosophy. She is overwhelmed by challenging behaviors in her classroom. She avoids airing her frustration online. She meets with the director, expresses her concerns, and asks for opportunities for professional development.</td>
<td>Michelle posts complaints on her blog and Twitter feed, alleging that her employer, Sunshine Child Care, does not care about appropriate practices and has driven her to drink. She posts pictures of herself wearing a T-shirt with the school logo while drinking alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities to Community and Society</strong>&lt;br&gt;“P-4.2—We shall apply for, accept, and work in positions for which we are personally well-suited and professionally qualified. We shall not offer services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.” (NAEYC, 2005)</td>
<td>Shannon uses online resources for professional development to enhance her knowledge of child development. She is honest about her current level of expertise and continually looks for ways to build her skills and qualifications.</td>
<td>Shannon posts a resume on a professional networking site that misrepresents her experience and education in working with young children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Development

Pursuit of professional development is part of every teacher’s ethical responsibility to community and society (NAEYC, 2005). Participation in professional organizations, studying professional literature, and collaboration with colleagues are key components of professionalism (Castle, 2009). Online forums, Web sites, and Facebook pages of professional organizations such as the Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) and NAEYC encourage communication, collaboration, and education that are essential for professional practice. Table 1 includes illustrations of e-professionalism, and the absence of e-professionalism, with regard to ethical guidelines.

Strategies for Maintaining Professionalism

In order to be professionals when using electronic media, the first step is to **PAUSE**. Stop and think before sending an email or posting any information online. Remember that regardless of disclaimers put on emails or privacy settings on social networking sites, the opinions or photos shared are **not** private and cannot be taken back. Ask how people might feel, or what the implications might be, if the information or images were broadcast on television.

The next step is to use the **PRIVACY** settings provided on social networking sites. While this does not ensure complete privacy, it does help limit who can access information that is posted.

The next step is to be **PROACTIVE**. Talk to colleagues and friends about professional expectations and the importance of maintaining professional reputations. Colleagues can agree to check with each other before posting any pictures or comments. Directors may find it helps to add a policy about the use of media messages and images.

Finally, be **PROFESSIONAL**. Before accepting a “friend” request from a social networking site, ask if the relationship should be that of a friend. Think about the boundaries of the relationship in person. What expectations are there for relationships with parents, students, and colleagues? Be sure to maintain the same guidelines online. See Table 2 for examples of these strategies for success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAUSE</strong></td>
<td>Krysia <em>pauses</em> and reads through all emails and potential postings on social networking sites. Before sharing information or photos, she asks herself these questions: Why am I sharing this? What response do I hope for? What might the response be? Who are the intended recipients? Who else might see it? Is there anyone who should not see this? Only after stopping to think about the responses to all of those questions does she share information or images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIVACY</strong></td>
<td>Cheryl uses the <em>privacy</em> settings on her social networking site, limiting those who can view her page to family and close friends. She is sure to check the privacy settings in each area including applications, her comments or updates, photos she posts, photos others post of her, and comments others make. She checks the settings periodically in case the site has changed the default privacy settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROACTIVE</strong></td>
<td>Being <em>proactive</em>, Anya works to prevent possible issues with professionalism through dialogue. Anya reminds friends, family, and co-workers whenever they take pictures of her to please not post them online without checking with her first. Anya does not post any pictures on her social networking site that she would not want her mother to see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROFESSIONAL</strong></td>
<td>Heather receives a friend request for a social networking site from the parent of a child in her class. She does not accept the request and is sure to communicate to all parents her policy on use of social networking with families in order to maintain a <em>professional</em> relationship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct as a guide. Be aware of the expectations that supervisors, families, or funders may have. Employees, students, faculty members, and others are urged to find out whether their employer or school has written guidelines about social networking, technology use, or e-professionalism. If not, recommend that pertinent policies be developed.

Early childhood professionals use electronic communication and online resources to build professional knowledge and skills as well as connect with others in the field. The benefits of online interactions come with responsibilities. Part of being a professional is being aware of these responsibilities and making informed decisions in all practices.
References

About the Author

Helene Arbouet Harte, Ed.D., is Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, College of Education and Human Services, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights. She teaches courses in collaborating with families as well as trends in early childhood education. Harte has 9 years of experience teaching online and hybrid courses, and has served as a mentor for the SECA student Facebook page.

If you’re a SECA member, you’ll find more resources and information about this topic in Dimensions Extra. Go to the "members-only" page of the SECA website to get the latest issue.
Meir Muller, Ph.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

**Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: Doing Our Best for Young Children**

Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Professionalism in day-to-day work with children and families, Feeney explores professional ideals in the areas of knowledge and skills, behaviors, and personal attributes. These chapters include helpful tools such as nine core knowledge areas, three essential components of behavior, and a systematic overview of three categories of personal attributes that support success.

The final chapter of the book calls for teachers to reconfirm their commitment to their profession. Feeney seems to suggest one method to reach this goal is to connect to the past, present, and future. The past connection is the rich legacy of early childhood education. The present is depicted by the voice inside each educator calling to make a difference in the lives of children. For the future, she suggests that educators find or become mentors and strive to be lifelong learners.

The text concludes with four practical appendices including the Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment, recommended resources, a self-assessment scale, and a professional development plan.

When Alice asks which way she ought to go, the Cheshire Cat replies, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.” Feeney brings her experiences including NAEYC Board service and publishing seven books to this project, where she clearly shows teacher educators, school administrators, and those who work with young children “where they need to go” if the goal of the journey is to be a professional early childhood educator.
Why Does Gender Matter? Counteracting Stereotypes With Young Children

How do young children’s experiences with gender biases affect their development and opportunities for leading successful lives? What can teachers do to counteract these stereotypes?

Olaiya E. Aina and Petronella A. Cameron

Despite current applause for gender equality, children seem to be as stereotypically sex-typed as those of yesteryear.

—Joannie M. Schrof

Stereotypes abound in any society. One way that people in diverse societies try to tolerate differences is to make generalizations that categorize individuals into groups (Keefe, Marshall, & Robeson, 2003). Some of these stereotypes are negative, while others are positive. All stereotypes contribute to a culture of prejudice, which is communicated in word and action to families, communities, and even young children (Derman-Sparks, 2001).

The early gender bias experiences that children encounter can shape their

• attitudes and beliefs related to their development of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships,
• access to education equality,
• participation in the corporate work world, as well as
• stifling their physical and psychological well being (Hendrix & Wei, 2009).

For early childhood educators, being aware of the effects of gender stereotypes is particularly critical, because concepts of gender identity are sometimes placed on children even before their birth, with the selection of paint colors for the nursery, for example. Children begin to form concepts of gender beginning around age 2, and most children know if they are a boy or girl by the age of 3 (Martin & Ruble, 2004).

Between the ages of 3 and 5 years, children develop their gender identity and begin to understand what it means to be male or female. Almost immediately after becoming gender aware, children begin developing stereotypes, which they apply to themselves and others, in an attempt to give meaning to and gain understanding about their own identity.

These stereotypes are fairly well developed by 5 years of age, and become rigidly defined between 5 and 7 years of age (Martin & Ruble, 2004), making the preschool years a critical period to deal with gender stereotypes. Stereotypes and sexism limit potential growth and development (Narahara, 1998) because internalizing negative stereotypes impacts self-esteem and ultimately, academic performance. Long-term gender bias effects become most apparent in students during adolescence (Carlson, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2004).

Preschool educators can help children develop a positive sense of their own gender. Teachers who are familiar with the factors that influence gender identity and stereotype development, and who understand the child’s active role in gender identity formation, can more effectively counteract and even neutralize gender bias in their classrooms and attempt to prevent the formation of children’s gender stereotypes (Zaman, 2007).

Gender Development Theories

Kohlberg (as cited in Martin & Ruble, 2004) was one of the first theorists to address gender as a learned, cognitive concept. His thinking was influenced by Piaget, who portrayed children as active learners who use interactions with their environment to construct an understanding of the world around them (Piaget, 1961). Kohlberg believed that children’s cognitive understanding of gender influenced their behavior (Kohlberg, 1981).

These early ideas have been supported by research. In one study, children were asked questions about traditional and
non-traditional images of women as portrayed in books. Children as young as 5 were able to use outside knowledge or assumptions to reconcile ideas that conflicted with their world view (Jackson, 2007). They rationalized and used “probably” statements to explain how they came to their conclusions, with or without the use of stereotypes. This research supports Gender-Schema Theory (Martin & Ruble, 2004), which involves the creation of organized structures of knowledge that influence thinking and behavior.

An alternative, but supplemental view of gender development, is that of gender as a social construct. Through imaginative play, children explore and understand gender roles (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002). After children can label themselves as a boy or girl, their preferences for gender-typed play activities and materials begins (Freeman, 2007). This demonstrates the link between play and gender identity formation.

For Vygotsky (1961), imitation and instruction are vital components to children’s development. Adults promote this learning by role-modeling behavior, assisting with challenging tasks, and passing along cultural meanings to objects and events, all of which are components of gender development.

Influences on Gender Identity and Stereotypes

Popular culture

Gender stereotypes are pervasive in the media and popular culture (Saltmarsh, 2009). Consumer products inundate children with gender-typed messages on bed sheets, towels, bandages, clothes, school supplies, toys, and furniture (Freeman, 2007). Not only are these products marketed for specific genders, but they are merchandised in stores by gender, creating segregated pink and blue aisles for shopping.

Media portrayals also reinforce stereotypes. Advertising about computers typically depicted men and boys as competent users, engaged in active or professional roles, while women and girls were passive observers or merely posed next to the computer while looking pretty or provocative (McNair, Kirova-Petrova, & Bhargava, 2001). In several European countries, television advertising to children is restricted or banned (Mitchener, 2001).

Movies convey particularly powerful messages about gender roles and stereotyping (Derman-Sparks, 2001). Considering the brand
strength and saturation of a multimedia company such as Disney, children are particularly susceptible.

Researchers examined the influence of Disney images of women and marriage on the perceptions of young Korean immigrant girls. These girls reported a resigned acceptance to the portrayal of princesses having to face external obstacles to marriage, such as family approval or laws, while princes could marry according to their own will (Lee, 2008). These researchers also noted that the girls associated desirability for a princess with one attribute, such as beauty or a singing voice, whereas princes were desired for their courage, chivalry, or actions (Lee, 2008). Combined with a tradition of female subservience in Korean culture, these young girls appeared to accept their disenfranchisement.

**Early childhood education**

The role of schools has become more prominent in the lives of children younger than 5 years of age (Sales, Spjeldnes, & Koeshe, 2010). Many children spend up to 10 hours a day in child care (Grafwallner, Fontaine, Torre, & Underhill, 2006). Two main aspects of the early childhood environment influence perceptions of young children’s gender and gender stereotypes:

- classroom materials and
- the instruction of teachers (Gee & Gee, 2005).

Several gender inequities were found in one preschool, the most obvious being the proliferation of gender-typed toys, such as pink kitchen sets. Further scrutiny revealed a large proportion of books in the library that showed gender bias of some kind (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002).

The classroom environment can affect not only how young children understand important social issues, such as those of gender, but also what they think about themselves and others. Korean immigrant girls perceived that a woman could not be President of the United States because a classroom poster depicted all male presidents (Lee, 2008).

Teachers have tremendous influence on how children develop ideas of gender and gender significance. Traditional caregivers typically reinforced gender-stereotyped traits when they praised girls for their clothing, hairstyles, neatness, and helping behaviors, and in contrast praised boys for their strength, physical skill, size, and academic accomplishments (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002). These teachers used “honey” and “sweetie” to address girls, but said “you guys” when speaking to the entire class (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002).

While unintentional, a teacher’s inherent biases can perpetuate unfair stereotypes and may be manifested in discriminatory classroom practices. For example, one group of teachers perceived girls as passive learners and therefore more “teachable” than boys (Erden & Wolfgang, 2004). Similarly, classroom management techniques may reward obedience versus assertiveness, which puts highly active children at a disadvantage. A teacher’s stereotypes may lead to interactions with children that are neither gender-fair nor gender-congruent (Hyun, 2001).

Males demand and receive more attention from their teachers and therefore receive more specific, instructive feedback from teachers (Erden & Wolfgang, 2004). In comparison, females become less demanding of the teacher’s attention; that results in lower levels of achievement and self-esteem, which therefore limits their career goals to more traditional, nurturing, and often lower-paying careers. Males do not escape the gender bias, however, as they are subject to conforming to male stereotypes and experience less nurturing behavior (Zaman, 2007).

Every day, teaching may occur in curriculum areas where positive or negative stereotypes can affect children’s concepts of self-competence (Ebach, et al., 2009). One study found that 80% of the observed teachers discouraged preschool girls from using computers by their words and attitudes (McNair, Kirova-Petrova, & Bhargava, 2001). This stereotyping may contribute to young girls’ inability to become competent users of technology.

**Friends**

Children also have been shown to actively create gender identities through interactions with each other (Thorne, 1993). Friendship patterns and peer pressure contribute to gender stereotypes, especially among boys, who have the tendency to self-policing peers, ridiculing those who show feminine traits (Morrow, 2006). Children’s gender-typed toy preferences are more likely to be exhibited when in the proximity of peers who approve of the gender-typed choices (Hughes, 2003).

**Family**

In addition to role modeling, families influence gender learning
when they reinforce or discourage specific behaviors, particularly in play. Leaper (2000) found that

- Mothers were more likely than fathers to encourage collaborative play with both sons and daughters.
- Mothers favored affiliative play with daughters, that is, they encouraged interactions that were warm, supportive, and responsive.
- Fathers were more likely than mothers to react negatively to cross-gender behavior, especially with sons.

Teachers can communicate with families and children about their experiences, thoughts, and behaviors and provide resources in the community and schools to assist them in developing healthy gender attitudes (Spjeldnes, Koesehe, & Sales, 2010).

Storytelling is another way that families influence how children learn about gender. Storytelling can familiarize children with valued traits and personal characteristics. Fiese and Skillman (2000) reported several storytelling patterns that can lead children to develop gender-typed traits and values:

- Sons were more likely to be told stories of autonomy and achievement.
- Daughters were more likely to be told stories of relationships or support.
- Fathers more often told stories of mastery and success.
- Mothers’ stories were usually a direct expression of emotion.

Family culture and ethnicity also influences children’s perceptions of gender. The cultural biases of different ethnic groups may expose children to more deeply ingrained stereotypes than exist in the mainstream culture (Robeson, Marshall, & Keefe, 1999). For example, the Asian cultural emphasis on the value of sons can be communicated in subtle or not-so-subtle ways that influence daughters’ self-concepts of value and worth as girls (Morrow, 2006).

Children’s literature

Books have a tremendous influence on young children (Narahara, 1998). The main characters provide role models and definitions of masculinity and femininity for children. Because children are active and critical readers, books and their illustrations become a cultural resource for children to learn social norms (Jackson, 2007).

In a study of Newberry and Caldecott award-winning books, male protagonists outnumbered female ones three to one, and 21 out of 25 books contained images of women wearing aprons (Narahara, 1998). These books also contained no Latino or African American main characters. Narahara indicated that it could be assumed that children will
undervalue the importance of their lives if they are unable to identify with characters in books. Images or characters in books can create positive or negative emotions in young children, and when children understand their peers’ cultural traditions that are more likely to form a more positive perspective of themselves and others (Nahl & Bilal, 2007).

**Consequences of Gender Stereotyping**

**Activity Choice**

Young children often reveal their gender stereotyping in their play. During dramatic play, preschool females are more likely to choose family roles, while males are more likely to choose adventure or action-oriented roles, such as superheroes (Hughes, 2003).

In another study, before intervention, males spent 25% of their time in block play versus 2% in housekeeping areas (Unger, 1981). Females, however, spent 10% of their time in housekeeping and only 2% in the block area. By combining the spaces and creating a gender-neutral play area, the researchers observed an 8% increase in housekeeping play by the boys and a 9% increase in block play by the girls.

As noted earlier, children apply gender stereotypes to toys by the time they are 3 (Freeman, 2007). In a study conducted with mothers and fathers of 3- to 5-year-old children, children’s perceptions of parental approval were found out of alignment with the parents’ self-described attitudes.

- Parents demonstrated markedly non-stereotyped attitudes on parent questionnaires about how they would react to their children’s cross-gender play.
- The children themselves indicated that their parents would not approve of most cross-gender play, especially for the boys, who thought their fathers would approve of cross-gender choices only 9% of the time.

• When asked, 64% of parents said they would buy their son a doll, 84% would not get upset seeing their son wearing a dress in the dramatic play area, and 92% did not think ballet lessons for a boy would be a mistake.

This study revealed a large discrepancy between the attitudes that parents publicly profess and the subtle messages that their children perceive (Freeman, 2007).

**Career Aspirations**

Occupation is a major signal of self identity. Gottfredson (2004) proposed that career aspirations originate in the preschool years, and that projecting a concept of a future self can be seen as an attempt to present an existing self-image.

In a study examining career aspirations of 4- and 5-year-old children, researchers coded participants’ responses by categorizing occupations as female, male, or neutral, based on the national statistics for that occupation (Care, Denas, & Brown, 2007). They also considered the occupation of the parents. These researchers found that

- there was an early bias associated with identifying with the same-gender adult.
- males aspired to more gender-typed fields than girls, who chose evenly among traditionally male, female, and neutral occupations.
- when asked to nominate jobs that they would not want, both girls and boys rejected more traditionally female occupations than male and neutral careers.
The researchers hypothesized that these findings are due to the lower prestige of typically female occupations (Care, Denas, & Brown, 2007), and the significance of that would be profound: Girls as young as 4 have already internalized the belief that women’s work is neither as valuable nor as desirable as men’s.

**Academic Outcomes**

The hidden messages that girls receive about math, science, and technology shape their self-concept, confidence, and interest in those subjects (Ebach, et al. 2009). These messages can come from bias in the media, from family or teachers who may exhibit lower expectations for females in these subject areas, or even from the medium itself, as in the case of computer software demonstrating a high level of gender bias favoring males (McNair, Kirova-Petrova, & Bhargava, 2001).

Calling attention to gender identity before an early elementary standardized math test disrupted the academic achievement of females and strengthened the performance of males (Neuville & Croizet, 2007). When gender identity was not emphasized, females performed just as well or better as their male peers in the control group.

The imbalance between male and female characters in children’s literature and school reading texts creates a situation where males rarely may be required to cross gender boundaries when reading. In addition, the group socialization of individual readers may reinforce reading preferences by gender. Males as young as 5 taunted other boys for reading a book they designated as a girl’s book (Sandholtz & Sandholtz, 2010).

### Recommendations for Teachers

The behavior of early childhood educators is a crucial factor in the quality of the learning process (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2008).

**Classroom materials**

Gender stereotypes and sexism limit children’s potential growth and development. Teachers are encouraged to carefully examine classroom environments for the presence of toys that are marketed in ways that encourage single-gender use such as:
- Barbie® dolls
- Hot Wheels®
- computers designed for boys

Several Web sites promote furniture specifically designed for males or females (Freeman, 2007). Any materials that promote gender-stereotyped play should either be removed so that the classroom conveys a gender-neutral invitation for all students to enjoy, or discussed with children to ensure that they understand these toys are for males and females.

**Critically evaluate books for gender bias.**

Picture books provide role models for children in defining standards for feminine and masculine behavior, yet sexism manifests itself in diverse ways in children’s literature (Tsao, 2008). Nonexist books, on the other hand, produce positive changes in self-concept, attitudes, and behavior. Children’s gender attitudes may be positively changed through the reading of appropriate children’s literature and other book-related activities (Blumberg, 2008).

Teachers are urged to critically evaluate books for gender bias. However, rather than eliminating all books with stereotypes, teachers can guide children to recognize stereotypes and increase independent critical thinking about gender and perceptions of gender. Making a concerted effort to provide positive, empowered stories and images of diverse characters will activate positive self-concepts for children and promote anti-bias attitudes among the entire class (Derman-Sparks, 2001).

**Curriculum**

Males typically called out in class eight times more often than females, and sometimes their comments had little to do with the discussion (Walker, 2005). When a male called out, the teacher responded whether or not the comment was insightful or relevant, but when a female called out, she was reminded of the rule about not talking unless called upon. If this happened only once, permanent damage would certainly not be a consequence, but once a day, every day, for 12 years of school would certainly be enough to have a sizeable impact on female students (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

When planning learning experiences, teachers can challenge potential stereotypes by presenting non-traditional images and role models. They might:
- request speakers from children’s families,
- feature unbiased books and materials, and
- give equal praise and encouragement to females in math and science and males.
in creative and language arts (Derman-Sparks, 2001).

Skilled teachers encourage cross-gender activities and play in cross-gender centers. They can also positively reinforce children who are playing with non-stereotyped toys by talking with them and supporting their learning.

Families

Gender differentiation and identity construction begins at home, in that familial practices are often profoundly gendered in terms of relationships and roles (Morrow, 2006). Teachers can help inform families of children by

- demonstrating unbiased interactions and communication, and
- providing coaching and encouragement, while
- respecting cultural differences without judgment or condescension.

Family workshops and information about the long-term effects of gender bias can also increase the awareness and critical thinking about ways that families communicate gender stereotypes to children (Small, 2003).

Implications for Teacher Education

Teachers play a critical role in promoting equitable learning. Findings from national surveys in the U.S. suggest that prospective teachers receive little or no teacher preparation about equity, perhaps due to competing requirements in limited time (Langford, 2006; Sadker, et al., 2007; Sandholtz & Sandholtz, 2010). Consequently, new teachers are often unaware of how their behavior and the educational materials they use may hinder equitable learning in their classrooms.

In addition, a common misconception of preservice teachers is that only students, not teachers, are responsible for bias in classroom interactions. Novice teachers may enter the profession without the skills to make changes in four key areas:

- school curriculum,
- interaction patterns,
- pedagogical strategies, and
- use of resources.

It is imperative to prepare novice teachers to recognize gender issues and promote equitable teaching (Fulmer, 2010). Teacher educators themselves must be committed to teaching students about gender issues. If only a few teacher educators in an institution address gender issues, preservice teachers receive mixed messages about their importance. The curriculum in high-quality teacher education programs incorporates gender issues.

Although making gender issues a required course may seem like a viable approach, Geist and King (2008) argue that it is problematic for three reasons:

- few programs have available space;
- a separate course may leave important gender dimensions out of educational foundations, methods courses, and field experience; and
- the separation may suggest gender equity is a sidebar for students to the real work of education.

The content of textbooks and instructional materials throughout teacher education courses is critical because of its potential to reduce or, through omission and stereotyping, reinforce biased attitudes and behaviors (Sadker, et al., 2007).

Roles of Administrators

Administrators are urged to establish an ongoing process of introspection and evaluation to help teachers consider how they relate to genders differently. Teachers can then monitor their language and actions in order to eliminate inadvertently biased messages.

Administrators are also advised to consider the consequences of hiring an all-female staff. Program structure should also allow for the maintenance of group gender balance to facilitate opportunities for male/female interaction (Robeson, Marshall, & Keefe, 2003). Additionally, administrators can coordinate in-service opportunities for families and professional development in the areas of anti-bias curriculum and neutralizing gender stereotypes in young children.

Conclusions

The power of self-concept is profound, as is the ability of adults to influence the children around them. Families and teachers are encouraged to conscientiously and actively create a positive learning environment for young children—not just in promoting developmentally appropriate practices to stimulate cognitive, social, emotional, and physical
domains, but also in creating a moral context for what they learn, as well as to help shape a global, multicultural, anti-bias world view.

Young children create and internalize their own meanings of gender, based on the social cues of the adults, environments, and media around them. Adults in turn have a responsibility to ensure that those cues and messages create a healthy understanding of what it means to be male and female (Derman-Sparks, 2001).

By equipping young children with positive messages of empowerment regardless of gender, in addition to the critical thinking skills to identify stereotypes, teachers and families can impart in children self-concept resiliency, even when faced with negative stereotypes (Small, 2003). Those children will then be less likely to perpetuate the stereotypes and can help end the cycle of prejudice.

References


About the Authors

Olaiya E. Aina, Ph.D., is a Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction at California State University, Los Angeles. Aina is a former teacher and an administrator from K-12 both in Nigeria and Canada. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in early childhood education and coordinates the Master’s Program. Aina is author of several children’s storybooks and articles. He is also a storyteller.

Petronella A. Cameron, Ph.D., is an Early Childhood Consultant and Assistant Professor and Program Director in Early Childhood Education at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio. She was a graduate teaching assistant for Aina at California State University, Los Angeles. In addition to teaching preschool through grade 2 for several years, she participated in an early childhood teaching internship program at La Verne University in California.

Notice of Intent to Change SECA By-laws and Policies

An organization with static by-laws and policies is an organization that won’t easily move forward to meet the changing needs of its members. With that said, SECA is undertaking two revisions that will make the organization more flexible in the way it does business and more streamlined and efficient.

The Board has asked that we change the SECA fiscal year to make our annual finances more understandable and more reflective of the current way we do business. Currently, the fiscal year runs on a calendar year, January 1 to December 31. Because our conference takes place in January or February each year, we have conference revenue that is received in the fiscal year prior to the actual conference date which makes planning and review of the financials more difficult. It also puts the majority of our annual expenses within the first few months of the new fiscal year, so that we have a harder time knowing whether we are on target with our budget. Proposal #1 will be that the SECA fiscal year be changed to July 1-June 30 so that all conference revenue and expenses for each conference will appear within the same fiscal year. This will require that several articles of the By-laws be changed to reflect the change in the fiscal year.

The second discussion concerned whether the old Executive Committee structure was still valid and whether the position of Vice-President (which is appointed by the President) was still needed. Because of a prior change, the Vice-President no longer assumes the office of President in the case of a resignation or illness. (The elected Immediate Past-President or the President-Elect will transition into the office if that occurs.) Proposal #2: The office of Vice-President will be eliminated and the duties assigned to various Commissions of the Board. This will have the additional benefit of reducing costs associated with the fall Executive Committee meeting. The person currently holding the position will rotate off the Board in January, so no future appointment will be necessary.

The complete language associated with these by-law amendments will be posted on-line, printed in SECA publications and available in print form at the annual business meeting in San Antonio. A change to the by-laws requires a membership vote.

The SECA Policies and Procedures are simply those operational policies that govern the day-to-day business of the Association. The Board may vote to change the policies and procedures at any time and we will make some small changes to that document.

The proposed changes to the by-laws and policies and procedures are available at http://www.southernearbychildhood.org/leadership_pdf.php#policies. The full text of these changes will be published in the winter 2012 issue of the SECA Reporter.
Amazing Grace
written by Mary Hoffman and illustrated by Caroline Binch.

Grace loves to read and act out stories she has heard. When Grace’s class decides to perform the play Peter Pan, she knows exactly the role she wants to play—Peter. Her friends tell her she can’t be Peter because she’s not a boy and she is Black. Her grandmother reminds her she can be anything she wants if she puts her mind to it. After Grace’s grandmother takes her to a ballet starring a young woman from Trinidad, Grace practices dancing in her imaginary tutu just like Juliet. When her classmates see her audition for the play, they know she is the perfect Peter. The play is a fantastic success!

**Ages:** Preschool through second grade

**Teaching concepts:** self concept, families, storytelling, occupations

---

**PRETEND PLAY:** Add a variety of costumes, professional clothing, and props to the dramatic play area. Familiar books can stimulate children’s ideas for role-playing. Encourage children to try a variety of roles and offer guidance if needed to prevent stereotyping of roles.

**PRETEND PLAY:** Using a puppet stage or table on its side, children use craft-stick puppets to dramatize familiar stories. Children glue their drawings (or cut-outs) of favorite story characters to the stick. Children refer to books, such as *Three Billy Goats Gruff, Anansi the Spider, Amazing Grace, Brown Bear Brown Bear, and We’re Going on a Bear Hunt* for story sequence or character roles.

**MUSIC & MOVEMENT:** Using patterned sentence stems, children complete a sentence such as “I can…” or “I want to…” using invented spelling or dictations for an adult to write. After children illustrate their sentences, they assemble and bind them into a book to place in the book center.

**SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL:** Children write and decorate invitations to family or community members to share information about what they do. Seek diversity in gender and ethnicity so children hear and see men and women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in many different situations. Look for maintenance workers, electricians, hair stylists, construction workers, orchestra members, dancers, artists, and other occupations.

**LITERACY:** Using patterned sentence stems, children complete a sentence such as “I can…” or “I want to…” using invented spelling or dictations for an adult to write. After children illustrate their sentences, they assemble and bind them into a book to place in the book center.

**LITERACY:** Select books representing individuals in a variety of work situations and from a variety of ethnic and gender groups that illustrate how individuals live into their dreams by working hard and never giving up, such as *Mirette on the High Wire, Miss Rumphius, Sam Johnson and the Blue Ribbon Quilt, Lady Bug Girl, More Than Anything Else, Amelia & Eleanor Go for a Ride, Snowflake Bentley, Martin’s Big Words, and Art From Her Heart.*

*Tracy Anne Jones, Ed.D.*, is the Manager of Provider Engagement at Collaborative for Children, a non-profit agency dedicated to building a strong educational foundation for young children.
Accessible Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programs

What strategies enable families to be full and active participants in their young children’s educations? This practical framework can be implemented in classrooms serving today’s diverse families.

Johnetta W. Morrison, Pamela Storey, and Chenyi Zhang

Denise Hampton works an 8 to 5 job that leaves almost no time to spend in her daughter’s early childhood classroom. The teacher, Ms. Pam, sends home a weekly newsletter describing the group’s accomplishments. Ms. Pam also occasionally distributes information about the class via e-mail. She feels she is doing a better than average job in communicating with families about their children’s education.

Denise appreciates this information, but would like to genuinely participate in her child’s learning, so she expresses her wishes to Ms. Pam. Their discussion alerts Ms. Pam to the fact that she could provide a range of opportunities for working families to become more fully engaged in their children’s learning experiences.

Family involvement in early childhood classrooms benefits children, school staff, and families (Bradley & Kibera, 2006; Epstein, 2001). The development of a strong relationship between early childhood programs and families is a critical component of developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

The work of Epstein (2001), Swap (1993), and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004) serve as a foundation for the description of family involvement in early education upon which this article is based. Family involvement encompasses the participation of the parent (or any family member or fictive kin) in the child’s education. This participation occurs in and outside the school, including two-way communication that involves child learning. The activities family members are involved in

- support the child’s learning process (at home, in the classroom, and within the community),
- exchange information about the child’s learning process (child’s progress, early childhood curriculum, developmental and cultural activities in the community),
- offer opportunities to participate in school decision-making leadership regarding the child’s education, and
- enable families to support children as learners in their homes.

In developing a plan for partnering with families, there is no one blueprint or single set of practices that define a family-school partnership (Decker, Decker, & Brown (2007).

Benefits and Challenges of Family Involvement

Several researchers pinpoint a positive correlation between family involvement in their children’s education and children’s achievement (see Epstein, 2001; Fan, 2001; Kim, 2002; Redding, 2006). Positive family involvement leads to better

- social,
- behavioral, and
- academic outcomes

for children from all ethnic and economic backgrounds (Ball, 2006; Marcon 1999).

Family participation in their children’s educations can be critical because it nurtures cognitive and emotional resilience, especially in the face of life stressors such as poverty and neighborhoods with few resources (Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007). Low-income families’ ongoing participation in preschool and kindergarten activities has been associated with children’s higher reading achievement, lower rates of grade retention,
and fewer years in special education when children were in eighth grade (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Families who are involved in their children’s early learning classrooms have a better understanding of their children’s education (DiNatale, 2002). Families and teachers who regularly learn about one another’s interests and cultures can develop a richer and more varied early childhood curriculum.

When teachers establish a liaison with children’s families, they feel more rewarded in their roles as teachers (Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2006). The most experienced teachers, working in high-quality early childhood classrooms, had more family volunteers (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004). Family participation is certainly an excellent way to improve the quality of early childhood programs.

Respect for family traditions and cultures is essential to assure that they feel welcome and honored by all program staff.

Time also impinges on families’ abilities to be involved (Becker & Epstein, 1982). The typical 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday does not easily give some family members much flexible time to participate in classrooms.

Fortunately, family involvement in education is much broader than being present during the school day. Teachers and schools can encourage and support family participation with a variety of strategies such as those recommended here.

**Framework for Accessible Family Involvement**

One comprehensive perspective on family involvement evolved from a review of studies from preschool through high school that included educators and families (Epstein, 2001). Epstein’s framework includes six types of involvement:

1. **Parenting**—home environments that support achievement
2. **Communicating**—two-way information sharing between school and home
3. **Volunteering**—helping with planned activities in and outside the classroom
4. **Learning at home**—parents assisting children in the learning process at home
5. **Decision making**—parent involvement in school decisions
6. **Collaborating with the community**—use of local services and resources to help children learn

The early childhood family involvement model presented here has at its heart Epstein’s research-based work, grouped into four components:

- Staff and Family Communication [Epstein types 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5]
Components of Accessible Family Involvement

- Staff and Family Communication
- Family–Child Collaborations
- Teacher–Family Relationship Building
- Community Connections

工作人员和家庭沟通

教师可以实施多种举措来支持
- 学校和家庭沟通交流，
- 家长参与决策，
- 有意义的志愿者机会，以及
- 积极的育儿过程。

家庭中心。如果空间允许，创建一个温馨的空间，配备舒适的家具，邀请家庭成员相互交谈。可以放置一个家庭笔记本，放置在方便的地方，让家庭成员可以写评论和问题给老师。设置一台可以使用互联网的电脑，供家庭使用。提供带走的活动，如带孩子一起探索的书籍和游戏，育儿和儿童发展的文章，以及其他对家庭有兴趣的信息。

家庭公告板。在家庭中心、教室或走廊等显眼的地方，张贴有关孩子、他们的学习经历和学校活动的日常信息。板上可能包括志愿者请求签名列表等，例如操场清洁日和家庭访问日。鼓励家庭分享他们希望看到的内容，以及鼓励他们贡献资源。

家庭-教师会议。灵活安排与家庭的会议时间。需要考虑的因素包括交通需求、儿童保育安排、提供翻译者的可能性（Cellitti, 2010）以及安排方便的时间。

在新学年开始时，鼓励家庭分享有关孩子，如食物过敏、家庭传统以及对儿童学习的期望等信息。通常在孩子注册时会提供一份信息手册，以便于早期讨论疑问。

教师应鼓励每年至少再举行两次家庭会议，同时保持随时与家长沟通的渠道。

当教师与孩子家庭建立联系时，他们会感到在教师角色中更加有成就感。最有经验的教师，在高品质的早期儿童课堂上，有更多的家庭志愿者。

可获取的家庭参与

有效教师将使用此模型的四个组件的所有特征，选择策略，使家庭成员和任何可能对支持孩子感兴趣的人决定他们希望如何参与。

家庭-教师会议。灵活安排与家庭的会议时间。需要考虑的因素包括交通需求、儿童保育安排、提供翻译者的可能性（Cellitti, 2010）以及安排方便的时间。

在新学年开始时，鼓励家庭分享有关孩子，如食物过敏、家庭传统以及对儿童学习的期望等信息。通常在孩子注册时会提供一份信息手册，以便于早期讨论疑问。

教师应鼓励每年至少再举行两次家庭会议，同时保持随时与家长沟通的渠道。

当教师与孩子家庭建立联系时，他们会感到在教师角色中更加有成就感。最有经验的教师，在高品质的早期儿童课堂上，有更多的家庭志愿者。
in person, by phone, or through e-mail. Face-to-face conferences, conducted in the family’s home language, are by far the most effective. Teachers can share children’s portfolios, ask for family insights about children’s experiences, and encourage families to become more familiar with and involved in classroom learning opportunities.

**Newsletters.** Either on paper, DVDs, or electronically, provide weekly information about children’s learning, community resources, and school events such as parent advisory meetings (Sanchez, Walsh, & Rose, 2011). Offer newsletters in multiple languages as needed. Find creative ways to involve families in writing, photography, and producing the newsletters.

**Web site.** A school Web site is ideal to communicate detailed information about the classroom and school. Upload photos of children’s learning experiences (obtain releases first) to more fully share daily events with families. Offer parenting/child development informational videos and other resources. Provide links to community resources and events. Families may be eager to assist with photography, sharing event information, and even designing and updating the site.

**Program events.** Early childhood programs often encourage family members to take an active role in classroom activities such as breakfasts with featured guests, field trip planning and travel, community-worker visits, and traditional holiday celebrations. Ask families for ideas about events that appeal to them, and encourage them to take leadership roles in their planning and implementation.

**Time and Technology Issues**

When teachers offer a variety of ways for families to actively communicate with them, including electronically, family time constraints on participation become less of a factor. Communicating electronically on blogs and social networking sites must be done in a professional manner and confidentiality is essential (Harte, 2011).

A limited-access class Web site is suggested because user-friendly layouts make it easier for family members to browse and search for information. The site must be password secured to assure there is no public access to it. Even so, specific information about students, their families, and/or teachers is not appropriate on a class Web site. Whenever possible for meetings, conferences, and school events, arrange for child care to help assure that families who wish to participate may do so.

**Family-Child Collaborations**

Early childhood teachers are in an ideal position to encourage families to nurture their children’s academic growth and value learning. Children benefit from their family’s emotional and social development support. Families believe their efforts help their children and that they are expected to do so by the educational system (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001).

These are some at-home learning experiences from which families and their children can benefit. Be sure to share information about these activities, and their importance, in the family’s first language. Ask families for ideas about other ways they enjoy learning together.

- **Family learning opportunities** that build on classroom learning experiences such as observing nature together, children interviewing family members, or joint art explorations
- **Hands-on take-home kits** selected by the child to complete with a family member at home. Activities elaborate on the curriculum
- **Early reading, math, writing, and other academic explorations** that children do with family members
- **Assignments in which children present information** researched with their families to their classmates

**Teacher-Family Relationship Building**

Communication is at the heart of the third component of this family involvement framework as well. Solid collaborative relationships are built during these and other direct interactions among families and teachers.

- **Home visits**
- **Parent-teacher conferences**
- **E-mail list serve from teacher to families**
- **Daily updates for families at drop-off and pick-up times**

Regular opportunities for direct communication with family members are essential for accurate and timely exchanges of information. Licensed and certified interpreters are preferred when working with families who speak languages other than English (Cellitti, 2010). Interpreters are essential, particularly when
dealing with sensitive issues. Be sure to consider factors such as the level of information to be presented, the interpreter’s relationship to the family, and cultural issues.

Families’ perceptions of the school staff, and any barriers they experience in trying to establish contact with their children’s schools, can influence families’ decisions to get involved in their children’s school experience (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005). Faculty and administrative commitment—and a welcoming school climate—are imperative to a successful family involvement process (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009).

Community Connections

Links to community resources and activities that enhance children’s learning are readily available to families in high-quality early childhood programs. Disseminate the information in various formats to assure that all families have access, and can add to it.

Community involvement by children and their families can strengthen children’s learning, while positively influencing the family and the school. Teachers who tie community-based participation into the curriculum extend children’s learning far beyond the classroom. These are some types of community activities that may appeal to families as volunteers and/or participants:

- Education and information fairs
- Health and fitness resources
- Sports events that appeal to or engage young children
- Cultural events such as children’s concerts and plays
- Public library services
- Community center events
- Organizations that provide activities and services for children and their families

Summary

The family involvement strategies that Ms. Pam implemented resulted in a more comprehensive effort to increase access of families to her classroom. Families, teachers, and children can expect to experience different positive results from each type of involvement (Epstein, 2001).

Early childhood teachers are urged to implement strategies from all four components of this framework during the course of the school year. Selecting more than half of the suggested strategies from each of the four components would likely ensure a stronger partnership between teachers and families. Implementing all identified strategies is far more likely to lead to genuine family involvement.

Family participation in children’s early care and education enhances children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development while augmenting teacher/family relationships that reinforce mutual beliefs and practices. Family involvement can be a positive experience for everyone involved.

References


If you’re a SECA member, you’ll find more resources and information about this topic in Dimensions Extra. Go to the “members-only” page of the SECA website to get the latest issue.

Dimensions Is Looking for Digital Photographs

Have you been taking high-quality, high-resolution digital photos of young children, their teachers, and families? Dimensions publishes several photos in each issue. More choices will help us match article content with pictures of children engaged in captivating learning experiences.

To submit photos to SECA, first please check our photo guidelines at SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

Subjects & Predicates

THANK YOU, REVIEWERS

The Southern Early Childhood Association expresses its gratitude to these content experts who reviewed the manuscripts published in this issue of Dimensions of Early Childhood.

Johnetta W. Morrison, Ed.D., is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi. She has conducted research on family involvement in early childhood classrooms.

Pamela Storey, M.A., is a Child Development Laboratory Instructor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Missouri, Columbia. She has taught preschool children for more than 25 years and has conducted research on family involvement in early childhood classrooms.

Chenyi Zhang, M.S., is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. He has conducted research on family involvement in early childhood classrooms.

Loredana Apavaloaie
Connie Casha
Michelle Curler-Ervin
Jaesook Lee Gilbert
Heejong Sophia Han
Jennifer Hardy

Ann K. Levy
Sharon Lynch
Miriam McCaleb
Richard H. McElroy
Carla D. Saunders
Marie Sloane

Syretha Storey
Rasheeda T. West

Early childhood professionals who are interested in becoming SECA volunteer manuscript reviewers are invited to complete a Reviewer Application at SouthernEarlyChildhood.org.
Prepare Healthy Foods With Toddlers

“My turn to stir!”
“I do it!”
“I want more of these!”
“Mmmmm!”
“Yay!”

These are a few of the comments young children make when they prepare food with a little help from their teachers and families. Toddlers—from about 16 to 36 months—can learn a variety of skills as they prepare food and follow recipes in developmentally appropriate ways (Izumi-Taylor & Morris, 2007; Taylor & Dodd, 1999).

Current health risks such as obesity have led family members and early childhood educators to give more attention to choosing healthy foods. Because children’s eating habits are learned early (Izumi-Taylor & Morris, 2007; Marotz, Cross, & Rush, 2005), it is best to introduce various foods and tastes while they are young. Healthy eating experiences from the start set the stage for children’s choice of nutritious food in later years (Jarosh, Phelan, Dwyer, Ziegler, & Hendricks, 2006; Satter, 2011).

Early childhood teachers are encouraged to support young children’s healthy eating habits by offering simple food preparation experiences. All activities recommended here have been implemented with toddlers, with some modifications based on classroom teachers’ suggestions. Involve children’s families whenever possible—from providing ingredients to helping supervise the activity.

Although some adults may avoid giving toddlers the opportunity to experience cooking because they think younger children tend to make a mess (Izumi-Taylor & Morris, 2007), the benefits far outweigh the need for cleaning up any mess.

Why Prepare Food With Toddlers?

Toddlers enjoy and participate in simple and developmentally appropriate food preparation activities that are chosen “based on what we know about the development and learning of children within a given age range” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006, p. 6). Through such activities children experience a

• joy of food preparation,
• sense of accomplishment, and
• pleasure of tasting different food from diverse cultures (Taylor & Dodd, 1999).

Toddlers explore the world using their five senses, so cooking activities provide them with multi-sensory experience as they touch, smell, taste, see, and even hear food (Colker, 2005). They experience different food textures including slimy, crunchy, gritty, or mushy.

When children prepare food that they then eat, they naturally develop their own sense of good nutrition. The foods suggested in this article are nutritious (American...
Dietetic Association, 2011). Although all of the recipes included here require no heat source, the term cooking is used interchangeably with food preparation.

Cooking activities can involve everyone in an enjoyably creative experience. During the process, adults model their appreciation for and enjoyment of a variety of healthy foods (Marotz, Cross, & Rush, 2005). Their example influences children’s thoughts and behaviors regarding new tastes, textures, and smells.

Cooking activities support toddlers’ development of healthy eating habits, as well as three kinds of knowledge:

- physical,
- logico-mathematical, and
- social (DeVries, Zan, Hildebrant, Edmiaston, & Sales, 2002).

Toddlers can learn about physical properties of food such as fuzzy, smooth, crisp, soft, and colorful (Taylor & Dodd, 1999). When children wash, cut, and eat bits of celery, for example, they experience the hard, crisp, ridged, crunchy aspects of this green vegetable.

While cooking, toddlers synthesize logico-mathematical knowledge as they measure amounts, notice shapes, combine ingredients, observe changes in the texture and color of the mixture, and chart their preferences.

Teachers promote toddlers’ social knowledge as they talk about names of foods, describe steps in food preparation, learn rules for hygiene and dining, explore cultural traditions regarding the creation of certain foods, and follow safety precautions during preparation and cooking.

**Culture plays an important role in dietary habits.**

Culture plays an important role in food and dietary habits, so teachers and children’s families are urged to maintain open communication about their “home practices, familial values and attitudes, and cultural approaches to food and feeding young children” (Branscombe & Goble, 2008, p. 33).

**Start on a Nutritious Path**

Toddlers’ developmental task levels are a primary consideration when planning food preparation activities. There are a great many tasks that toddler cooks can learn, as shown in the sidebar. (next page)

Setting up a snack center with regular snack times every morning and afternoon might be a first step to introduce food preparation with toddlers (Colker, 2005; Parlakian & Lerner, 2007). Try to be as economically and environmentally responsible as possible. Consider using individually labeled fabric napkins and unbreakable, washable dinnerware rather than disposables.

Choose simple, healthy snacks that children make and serve on their
Toddlers who pour their own juice from small pitchers and spread soft cream cheese on whole-wheat crackers with wide craft sticks or plastic dinnerware soon become accustomed to fixing their own nutritious foods.

Food preparation activities are easily related to children’s literature (Izumi-Taylor & Morris, 2007). To follow up, a teacher could read aloud Eric Carle’s *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1987). Children might prepare a cream cheese spread, mix up fruit parfaits, or form “caterpillars” on a lettuce leaf (see the recipe section).

Mrs. Jackson read her toddlers *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, pointing out the colorful foods the caterpillar ate. She asked if the children would like to create their own very hungry caterpillars. They all nodded excitedly and eagerly went to the cooking table.

As they spread soft cream cheese on their whole-wheat crackers, Rashida said, “A birthday cake!”

William said, “Mmm!”

Christelle shouted, “A butterfly!” as she put her crackers with cream cheese on a lettuce leaf.

This section offers a number of simple, nutritious recipes that toddlers can easily follow with an adult’s leadership. While many of the ingredients are familiar, teachers are urged to consider introducing a broader range of healthy foods such as pine nuts, hummus, tofu, cream cheese, organic cheese, fruit chews, granola bars, and lentils.

### Spread, Scoop, and Smash

Spreading, scooping, and other food preparation actions give children opportunities to develop small motor skills and enhance coordination. Children’s brain development is nurtured as they encounter new foods, solve problems, process language required to understand and follow directions, and stretch their imaginations.

### Healthy, Easy Recipes

There are many snacks that toddlers can prepare for themselves—they simply need the opportunity and a little adult guidance. See the sidebar for some basic guidelines for cooking together. Families may be happy to have a copy of these suggestions as well.

### Guidelines for Food Preparation With Toddlers

- Display recipes to create opportunities for children’s literacy and math skills to develop. Write recipes on large paper so all children can see. Use pictures and numerals as well as words.
- Adapt recipes to incorporate local produce, traditional foods, and new tastes. Trail mix, for example, can be made from all sorts of combinations of whole-wheat crackers, whole-grain cereals, and dried fruits.
- Wash hands.
- Choose safe tools, such as wide craft sticks, plastic dinnerware, and unbreakable measuring cups and mixing bowls. Model the safe use of all tools.
- Arrange all ingredients and tools so they are easily accessible.
- Read and point out each step in the recipe. Connect print to the ingredients and steps to follow by writing experience stories, inventing new recipes, and charting children’s preferences.
- Make sure children are fully engaged in every step. Resist the urge to do tasks for them to avoid a mess or move the activity along.
- To avoid choking hazards, cut foods such as grapes, raw vegetables, and meat into 1/2-inch chunks. Do not serve popcorn to children younger than age 4. Insist that children sit while they eat.
- Describe each item as it is added. Talk about its name, color, shape, and texture. “You’re pouring the raisins from the measuring cup. See how some raisins are tiny and others are bigger. They’re ALL wrinkly and brown. Yum—these dried grapes are really going to be a treat.”
- Closely supervise toddlers as they work.
Hungry Caterpillar Fruit Parfaits

Ingredients
- Yogurt (preferably low fat or Greek)
- Whole-grain, unsweetened cereal
- Fresh or dried fruits
- Cups
- Spoon and plastic dinnerware

Various fruit combinations are possible, so just two variations are given here as examples. Name the recipe to match a topic or the children’s interests. For example, use either of the following recipes but arrange ingredients in the bowl or cup differently and call them by another name. A fruit parfait can easily become Split Bananas or a Blueberry Breakfast Bowl. Teachers also can introduce less familiar fruit choices, including star fruit, papaya, kiwi, mangos, kumquats, and fresh coconut.

Children stir the yogurt, cut up the fruits, and crush the cereal if needed. Children spoon alternating layers of yogurt, fruit, and cereal in cups.

Variation: Stir the ingredients and then sprinkle other small bits of fruit or crunchy cereal on top of the parfaits.

Bugs in a Boat

In addition to the familiar celery, peanut butter, and raisin treat called Ants on a Log, teachers might try celery, cream cheese, and dried cranberries. A clever name such as Bugs in a Boat further encourages toddlers to eat their creations. With very young toddlers, teachers are urged to cut the celery sticks into bite-size pieces or use bread sticks.

Chant the nursery rhyme “Rub-A-Dub-Dub, Three Men in a Tub” or sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” while preparing the boats to add a very logical and enjoyable language and musical component to this learning experience.

Smashing Colors

Ingredients
- Cooked or soft vegetables and/or fruits of the same color (carrots and sweet potatoes, peas and green beans, fresh blueberries and cooked purple potatoes or beets, bananas and cooked yellow squash or potatoes)
- Snack-size zipper plastic bags
- Wood mallets or small rolling pins
- Spoons

Children each count out two bags. They place small amounts of the same-color food in each bag, such as carrots in one bag and sweet potatoes in the other. Help children seal their bags.

Demonstrate how to gently smash the vegetables in the bag. Children smash the food.

Children open their bags, scoop out, and taste the smashed food.

Ask children to name the foods tasted and how they look and taste alike and different, both before and after mashing.

Children vote on the favorite vegetable they tasted. Record the votes on a chart that children can interpret and understand.
Stretch Imaginations and Curiosity

Toddlers tend to be very literal, so teachers can use children's books and discussions about recipes, for example, to encourage their imaginations. Here are two ideas to try.

- Spread cream cheese or nut butter on toast, crackers, or lettuce leaves. Stand animal crackers in the spread to create an animal parade.
- Spread round, square, or triangle crackers with soft cheese, all-fruit spread, or nut butter to pique interest in geometric shapes. Top with dried fruits, vegetable bits, diced meat, or cheese.

Pick Up on Books and Themes

Recipes can easily be modified to enhance the curriculum and expand upon children's favorite books. Imaginative teachers can modify the following examples in many ways.

Prepare this recipe (top right) after reading the wonderful *Brown Bear* book (Martin, 1995). Talk about the math involved (halves, squares, counting, circles) as well as the literature connections.

Prepare this recipe (bottom right) after reading the wonderful *Brown Bear* book (Martin, 1995). Talk about the math involved (halves, squares, counting, circles) as well as the literature connections.

**Brown Square, Brown Square, What Do You See?**

**Ingredients**
- Graham crackers
- Sugar-free chocolate pudding
- Bananas
- Wide craft sticks
- Small plates

Children break graham crackers in half to form squares. Each child takes one cracker. Children spread pudding on their crackers.

Children cut circular slices from the banana and place slices on their crackers.

Ask children to repeat “Brown Square, Brown Square, what do you see?” Children describe what they see, before they enjoy their treats.

**Alternatives:** Invent variations with other colors and shapes. For white squares, use saltine crackers, cream cheese or cottage cheese, and apple slices. Round Bears could be made using circular whole-grain crackers spread with hummus and cut-vegetable shapes for ears.

**Grinning Apples**

**Ingredients**
- Red apples
- Apple corer (adult use only)
- Plastic knives
- Sunbutter (ground sunflower seeds)
- White cheese slices
- Small plates

An adult corers the apples. Children slice them into wedges (adult assistance may be needed) and take two slices each.

Children cut cheese into tooth-shaped bits.

Children spread sunbutter on one apple slice. They top this with a row of teeth (cheese) sticking out of the red side. Place the other apple slice on top—with red side facing out. The apples look like grinning lips with teeth.

**Variations:** Substitute peanut butter or any other kind of nut butter.

**Carrot & Raisin Salad**

**Ingredients**
- Carrots
- Low-fat yogurt (or low-fat sour cream, mayonnaise, or Greek yogurt)
- Grater or food processor (adult use only)
- Raisins
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Cups
- Spoons

Children wash the carrots. An adult grates them. Children spoon out and mix carrots, raisins, and yogurt. Spoon into individual cups.

**Copyright © 2011 MYSQL 39 9 3 R 31**
Try Something Silly

Young children love to pretend, especially when it involves something unusual. This recipe is a bit messy, but its name sounds silly and the shaping process is great fun for children. Use this recipe along with exploring children’s books about dogs, such as *Dog Biscuit* (Cooper, 2009) or talking about children’s pets.

**Dog-Bone Treats**

**Ingredients**
- Whole-grain crackers
- Fruit- or vegetable-flavor soft cream cheese
- Zipper sandwich bags
- Spoons
- Plates

Each child takes one sandwich bag. Ask children to count four (depending on size) crackers and put them inside bag. Help children zip their bags.

Children use their hands to crush crackers.

Children add 1 or 2 spoons of cream cheese to the cracker crumbs. Mix by squeezing the bag.

Children empty contents of bag onto plate. They use their hands to shape the food into a dog bone.

*Alternatives:* Mix cream cheese with bits of fruit or veggies that the children cut up. Use a little fruit juice to soften the cream cheese for spreading.

Add food coloring and matching fillings to create Great Green Grapes or Orange Oranges, for example.

Encourage children to make their own odd or silly shapes out of the mixture, such as giant ant hills or car tires.

**Invite Family Members**

Cooking activities are especially fun and educational when family members and children work together. Creative teachers who invite families to share lunch using the following two toddler-friendly recipes can help families better understand how to support children’s learning at home, every day, in the kitchen.

**Let’s Wrap-a-Wrap**

**Ingredients**
- Whole-grain wraps
- Low-fat meat slices, such as ham, turkey, or roast beef
- Sliced cheeses
- Lettuce
- Mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Plastic dinnerware
- Plates

Children help place all ingredients and utensils within easy reach.

Together, children and family members spread out a wrap for each person. Select meat(s) and cheese(s) and place on wrap. Spread on sauce.

Creatively wrap-a-wrap and enjoy!

*Variation:* Children enjoy this activity when they learn a simple rap song to teach to their families.

Choose simple, healthy snacks that children make and serve on their own. Toddlers who pour their own juice from small pitchers and spread soft cream cheese on whole-wheat crackers with wide craft sticks soon become accustomed to fixing their own nutritious foods.
Food preparation with toddlers is such an engaging vehicle for meeting children’s developmental needs. Toddlers learn healthy eating habits; social competence; and skills in math, science, literacy, and creativity (Colker, 2005).

Some of the children who prepared the recipes in this article talked about their experiences with their families, who then asked for the recipes so they could cook at home. After getting the recipes, one parent said, “I didn’t know how to cook with my 2-year-old without heat, but now I know how.”

Obesity and unhealthy eating by everyone, young and old, are national problems. One partial solution is to help the very young develop nutritious eating habits. Early childhood professionals are advocates who consider all aspects of children’s development and nurture children’s healthy bodies as well as their minds.

### Ice Cream Social

**Ingredients (for each person)**
- ½ cup milk
- ¼ cup half and half
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 zipper sandwich bag
- 1-gallon size zipper bag
- 2 cups ice
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt
- Measuring spoons and cups

Children measure and place milk, half and half, and sugar in the smaller plastic bag. Seal carefully.

Place small bag inside the large bag. Add ice and salt. Seal the bag carefully.

Shake the bags until the mixture freezes.

_Suggestion:_ Children could place mittens or recycled, clean socks on their hands if the bags seem too cold to handle.

### References


### About the Authors

_Satomi Izumi-Taylor, Ph.D.,_ is Professor of Early Childhood Education, Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee. She has been teaching an infant and toddler development course and has been engaging her college students in cooking activities.

_Cheryl Rike, Ph.D.,_ was Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, who recently retired from teaching and now is enjoying cooking.

_If you’re a SECA member, you’ll find more resources and information about this topic in Dimensions Extra. Go to the “members-only” page of the SECA website to get the latest issue._
Extend

These Ideas With Books

Connect Toddler Food Preparation With a Children’s Book

Tracy Anne Jones, Ed.D.

Pancakes, Pancakes!
written and illustrated by Eric Carle.

The vibrant artwork in this classic Eric Carle story delights even adults who are likely to read the story over and over again! Jack wakes up hungry for breakfast and ready for a big plate of pancakes, but first he has to help his mom to get all the ingredients to make those yummy pancakes. Children will be captivated as Jack gets closer and closer to eating his homemade pancake.

Classroom Ideas!

Pancakes, Pancakes! is a very versatile book, and a perfect compliment to the curriculum for toddlers who are exploring food preparation. **Before doing any food activity, ask families about children’s ALLERGIES. Any ingredient could cause a reaction, especially in toddlers who are trying new foods.**

1+2=3

MATH: Making pancakes with toddlers requires a focus on safety and plenty of volunteers, but is a great opportunity to give children hands-on cooking experience. Focus on math as children measure and mix the ingredients. Talk about how much and how many, big and small, more than and less than. Offer a variety of flavors such as blueberry, apple, banana, or plain, and ask children to pick their favorite. Create a bar chart of a graph to talk about in circle time. Or list toddlers’ names next to photos or drawings of their favorite fruits.

HEALTH AND SAFETY: Whenever foods are served with children, make an opportunity to talk about nutrition. Point out foods that help children grow big and strong, and foods to eat less of. Children can create picture collages of healthy foods. Expand toddlers’ vocabularies about both foods and body parts (bones, teeth).

MOVEMENT & MUSIC: Children enjoy pretending to flip pancakes with any large spatulas of table tennis-type racquets and beanbags. This experience improves hand-eye coordination and is best done outside!

ART: Discuss what children like to put in their pancakes. They can draw pancakes and add the fruit. An adult can write down all the things they want to put into their pancakes on their art. Consider trying some interesting new pancake ideas! Toddlers can also draw or tear out pictures of other foods they eat for breakfast.

LITERACY: Add simple picture books and board books on food to the library center. Family photo books of toddlers’ favorite foods or photos of families eating provide excellent opportunities for young children to relate new concepts and vocabulary to their own experiences.

Tracy Anne Jones, Ed.D., is the Manager of Provider Engagement at Collaborative for Children, a non-profit agency dedicated to building a strong educational foundation for young children.
State Representative Mike Villarreal was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. His father immigrated to the United States from Mexico with his family as a child. His mother is a product of the Edgewood community on the West Side of San Antonio. Together they taught their children the importance of earning an education, working hard and aspiring for a better life.

In 1999, Mike launched a grassroots campaign for the Texas House of Representatives. His prior elected experience was serving as vice president of his neighborhood association in Beacon Hill. To win his election, Mike knocked on more than 4,000 doors to meet his voters one-on-one. On election night, Mike won by one vote, defeating a judge backed by the local political establishment.

Mike is in his 6th term at the State Capitol, advancing a public agenda that invests in education, protects our quality of life and environment, values work and aspiration, and ensures that government is accountable to citizens. Mike is known as a lawmaker who listens to all sides, studies the issues, and reaches his own independent decisions.

Spotlight On:

**Cooking With Toddlers?**

**Join Chef Greg Johnson in San Antonio**

Chef and Father, Greg Johnson, has been cooking professionally for 20 years. He is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy and has worked in some of the finest restaurants in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hawaii, Mexico and Seattle. His love of food has brought him around the world studying cuisine in France, Italy, England, Spain, and Mexico. For the past 11 years Chef Greg has been a Private Chef for some of the Northwest’s most high-profile families.

Presently, as the co-founder of Create Change Studios, Greg is inspiring families to come back to the table with his DVD series Chef and Father and website, www.chefandfather.com. Chef and Father helps parents with step-by-step instructions on cooking for your family from a Chef’s point of view. He is also co-producer of a children’s music CD with musician Adam Wood as well as working on various documentaries bringing Chefs and farmers together.

**2012 Public Policy Luncheon With Texas State Representative Mike Villarreal**

**Join us in San Antonio!**
Holly Elissa Bruno’s

Heart to Heart Conversations

on Leadership:

Your Guide to Making a Difference

Holly Elissa Bruno’s new radio program is a must listen for program directors, administrators, principals, and leaders. Ranging across topics from leadership to management, Holly helps her listeners gain a greater understanding of what it takes to tackle the issues at the heart of education today.

Tune in to hear heart-to-heart discussions as Holly asks educational leaders and experts to level about difficult-to-discuss issues they face!

BAm! radio

The Voice of the Education Community™

Body, Mind and Child

with

Rae Pica

Rae is co-founder of the BAM Radio Network and as host of Body, Mind and Child, an Internet radio program for parents and educators, Rae interviews experts in the fields of education, child development, play research, the neurosciences, and more.

Listen online at www.bamradionetwork.com
SECA has embarked upon a new venture and we have developed a Spanish language publication that will be available on the SECA Website. This publication is being developed by professionals who are currently working with and in classrooms in which Spanish is often a primary language for both children and staff.

This publication came about through the efforts of our members in the Miami-Dade area who were searching for Spanish language materials to use with early childhood programs in that area. They were concerned that good, basic materials about child development and good early childhood practice were not readily available and asked SECA to assist.

The publication includes information from interviews with directors, practical information gleaned from working in an early childhood program and basic child development information.

*Aula Infantil* is designed to provide an avenue for dissemination of basic information and is not a refereed journal. That’s intentional, so that SECA has a variety of publications that provide good resource information as well as publication opportunities for a diverse population of professionals. However, we do hold SECA publications to high standards, and we are pleased to have accomplished individuals who are helping to get us started.

The bulletin is posted at [http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/espanol.php](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/espanol.php)

We want to thank the following members for their contribution to the initial issues:

**Dr. Wilma R. de Meléndez**, a member of the SECA Editorial Committee and faculty at Nova Southeastern University.

**Mabel Valdés** of Nova Southeastern University, and

**Carol Monteleague**, a member of the SECA Board of Directors and early childhood consultant.

**If you would be interested in writing for Aula Infantil, please send a notice of interest to Glenda Bean, Executive Director at gbean@southernearlychildhood.org.** Join Wilma, Mabel and Carol at SECA 2012 to learn how to be a contributor to Aula Infantil!
Thursday, February 2, 2012

Nature Explore with Heather Fox comes to SECA to present two 3-hour sessions:

- We Dig Dirt: Additional Strategies for Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Outdoor Classrooms
- Using Your Outdoor Classroom for Preschool and Elementary Children

Nature Explore is a collaborative program of the Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation. The goal of the Foundation is to help children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral, joyful part of children’s daily learning.

Sponsored by Lakeshore Learning Materials

The Environmental Rating Scales Institute with Dr. Debby Cryer. As one of the authors of the rating scales, Dr. Cryer can refresh your knowledge of how the scales were developed, how the scales have changed over the last few years and how to tie the results of the rating process to curriculum development.

Session 1: The Research Behind the Rating Scales
Session 2: Relating Curriculum Development to Assessment of Quality

Friday, February 3, 2012

Dr. Michael Levine

D is for Digital: Meeting the Needs of Young Children in the Tech Age

Michael is the founding director of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, an action research and innovation lab devoted to harnessing the potential of digital media to advance young children’s learning and healthy development.

Greg Johnson

Chef and Father: Bringing Families Back to the Table

Greg Johnson has been cooking professionally for 20 years and is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy. He has created a DVD series, Chef and Father, to help families regain the joy of cooking together, while promoting healthy food habits in young children. This presentation on Friday afternoon will include a cooking demonstration.

Saturday, February 4, 2012

Dr. Pam Schiller

Brain Compatible Strategies — An Update on the Latest Research

A favorite of SECA audiences (and a past SECA President), Pam will bring her expertise and knowledge of infant/toddler brain development to SECA 2012. She is the Senior Author of the DLM Early Childhood Express and has worked in a variety of early childhood programs, including child care.

Sharon MacDonald

Dirt Tastes Better Than Jellybeans

Sharon has been training teachers for more than 20 years throughout the United States on a variety of early childhood topics and has written many teacher resource books and children’s books, including the SECA publication, Portfolio and Its Use. For SECA 2012, she’s introducing a new presentation on infants and toddlers as explorers—in their world, dirt does taste better than jellybeans because dirt is new and jellybeans might not be!

FOR COMPLETE CONFERENCE INFORMATION, INCLUDING AGENDAS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS, INFORMATION ON THE CONFERENCE HOTEL, AND HOW TO REGISTER, GO TO http://www.southerneverylearchood.org/seca_conference.php.
Special Events

2012 SECA Directors Seminar with Donna Thornton-Roberts
Friday, February 3, 2012
Donna Thornton-Roberts took a small child care company from one location to eleven in 10 short years. For the past 10 years, she has consulted in early education, non-profit organizations and other types of companies and programs. Join the Seminar participants to gain or reinforce knowledge and network with your colleagues from across the South.

This session requires pre-registration and includes:
- The Directors Seminar
- General conference registration that allows you to participate in other conference events
- Lunch, morning coffee and an afternoon refreshment break
- A resource notebook


2012 SECA Trainer Institute with Moya Fewson
Moving on UP! Taking Your Training to the Next Level
Sponsored by HighScope Educational Research Foundation
Thursday, February 2, 2012 / Friday, February 3, 2012
We’ve designed an Institute for the 2012 SECA Conference that’s just for trainers who are working in the field, have some experience and want to gain more knowledge and expertise. The Institute will begin on Thursday afternoon, February 2, and conclude on Friday afternoon, February 3, 2012. You’ll have an opportunity to learn from one of the best in the field and network with your colleagues from throughout the South. The Institute is designed to provide information that will translate to all types of training.

This session requires pre-registration and includes:
- The Trainer Institute
- General conference registration that allows you to participate in other conference events
- A ticket to the Public Policy Luncheon or the Institute Luncheon


2012 Public Policy Luncheon
The Honorable Mike Villarreal, Texas State Representative, will join us to share his perspective on the current political climate and how it will affect programs that support children and families, both in our states and throughout the country. He was born and raised in San Antonio and currently represents the district in the Texas State Legislature. During his 6 terms in the Legislature, he has continued to promote an agenda that invests in education, protects the quality of life and environment, values work and aspiration and ensures that government is accountable to citizens. He’s known as a lawmaker who listens to all sides, studies the issues and reaches his own independent decisions.

A Taste of History on the River Walk
The San Antonio Association for the Education of Young Children (SAAEYC) invites you to join them for an authentic South Texas experience on the River Walk, including a reception and dinner on the barges. All proceeds from this fundraising event will benefit SAAEYC. Requires pre-registration.

You can find the flyer about the event at http://www.southernearllychildhood.org/upload/file/2012%20Conference/SAAEYC%20Event.pdf.

FOR COMPLETE CONFERENCE INFORMATION, INCLUDING AGENDAS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS, INFORMATION ON THE CONFERENCE HOTEL, AND HOW TO REGISTER, GO TO http://www.southernearllychildhood.org/seca_conference.php.
Spotlight On:  
2012 SECA Director’s Seminar

Nothing is more disheartening than a struggling program, a disgruntled employee or parent!

By attending the Three Essential Competencies of Child Care Management, you will gain practical skills to solve these challenging issues. Donna will be sharing her techniques and proven methods of effective management.

Our 2012 Seminar will include:

- How to increase the quality of parent relations that impact a center’s viability.
- How to build enrollment through exceptional service by knowing what today’s parents want in care.
- How to provide quality care regardless of your budget’s size.
- How to coach today’s workforce to become internally motivated to give exceptional care.
- How to set proper spending ratios to ensure that “quality margin.”

Seminar Agenda

8:00-8:30 Coffee and Networking
8:30-9:00 Welcome, Bonding Activity, and Group Introductions
9:00-10:00 Fiscal Management—Budgeting for Quality Care
   • Fiscal ratios for solvency
   • Setting the right price—how to do it to ensure quality delivery
   • Examining the break-even for each age group
10:15-11:50 Conference Keynote with Dr. Michael Levine
   Technology and Early Childhood
12:00-12:45 Lunch/Networking
12:45-3:15 Customer Management
   • Positive parent relations defined—the benchmarks of best practice
   • Trends in service delivery
   • Age specificity—what parents are looking for in infant/toddler care, preschool and school-age care
   • Demographics of today’s parents
3:15-3:30 Break
3:30-5:00 Human Resources Management (Managing People Who Provide Care)
   • Coaching vs. supervising
   • Today’s unique management challenges
   • Onboarding—a new method of orientation
5:00-5:30 Evaluation and Q & A

Nothing is more disheartening than a struggling program, a disgruntled employee or parent!

This session requires pre-registration! So register now!

Donna Thornton-Roberts

Donna Thornton-Roberts is a goal oriented, mission driven, mature executive who has more than 25 years of experience leading people, programs and organizations with a solid record of accomplishments. Donna took a small child care company from one location to eleven in 10 short years. For the past 10 years, she has consulted in early education, non-profit organizations and other types of companies and programs.
Can’t find the Putting These Ideas Into Practice page for some of the articles in this issue?

That’s because we’ve moved them and expanded the resources that you can find to go with this article! Beginning with the fall issue of Dimensions of Early Childhood, these pages will be available only on-line and will be replaced with a review of either a children's book or professional book that will help you to implement the article’s concept in your classroom or program.

Dimensions Extra is our new-online publication that is designed to provide additional and easy-to-use resources for each article that we publish in Dimensions of Early Childhood.

In Dimensions Extra you’ll find:

- The Putting These Ideas Into Practice page for each article in the journal. These pages are designed to be handouts that can be utilized in training with your staff and we think they will be much easier to duplicate if you can print them from a computer file. No more trying to fit the printed journal on the copier and get it straight!
- A one-page handout for parents that provides information about the article topic. The more you educate your parents about high-quality early childhood education, the better!
- A list of professional books about the article topic that will help you with additional research or implementation of the concepts in your classroom.
- A list of websites that provide resources and information about the article.
- Reviews of children’s books that complement the article and provide additional options beyond the book featured in Dimensions of Early Childhood.
- Full page printable versions of sample forms included in an article that can be customized with your facility’s name and information.

We’ll send you an e-mail notification that Dimensions Extra is available when the journal is published; however, if you miss an e-mail

- Go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/members_only.php when you receive your journal
- Log in with your member ID number
- Click on Dimensions for Members

and you’ll find the latest copy of Dimensions Extra! Let us know what you think of our newest member benefit by sending us an e-mail at info@southernearlychildhood.org! We hope you like it.
Don’t forget your fall 2011 SECA Reporter!

It’s now available at http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/publications_reporter.php