

PROFESSIONAL BOOKS

**JANET BROWN McCRACKEN**

**MANAGING QUALITY IN YOUNG CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS: The Leader's Role.** *Mary Culkin (Ed.). New York: Teachers College Press, 2000. 243 pp.* The benefits of early care and education (ECE) on children's lives are currently being trumpeted in both professional and popular media. Consequently, a new awareness of the administrator's role in determining the quality of that care is emerging. Nevertheless, Mary Culkin argues that the field has failed to take action to ensure that administrators have the requisite training and skills. Culkin is one of the principal investigators of the *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study of Child Care Centers* (1995).

Although most ECE directors are former teachers with valuable expertise in dealing directly with children and families, such experience is certainly not sufficient to prepare them for their new role. In this 12-chapter volume, a group of prominent experts in ECE administration map out where we have been, where we are now, and where we need to go to correct this omission.

In Part 1, Dorothy Hewes, author of a widely used college textbook on administration, contributes a chapter on the history of the director's role. A chapter by Paula Jorde Bloom examines the metaphors and narratives that directors use to describe their roles. Chapters by Gwen Morgan, Nancy Brown and John Manning, and Roger Neugebauer identify essential competencies, core knowledge, and management abilities that directors need. Karen VanderVen outlines stages of directors' devel-

opment and places them within a systems context, based on Bronfenbrenner's theory of human ecology.

Part II lays out the argument for establishing a credentialing process for program administrators. Gwen Morgan argues that "rather than trying to adapt to incompatible ideas from the past, . . . we [those in the field of early care and education] should be asserting our own concepts as strengths and celebrating the ways in which we have always been ahead of the curve" (p. 146).

Anne Mitchell cites evidence from ECE in other countries, as well as from other professions in North America, to support the idea of requiring a credential for individual directors. While agreeing that national standards for directors are needed, Sue Bredekamp tackles issues of equity and accessibility in training, and argues against moving too quickly toward establishing a national credential. Roger Neugebauer and Marsha Poster examine current directors' perceptions of their own training and review several innovative professional development programs for directors. Citing trends in employer-sponsored child care and public welfare-to-work policies, Karen Hill-Scott sees improved management training as a key factor in bridging the gap between the profession's aspirations to maintain highest quality services and the limitations resulting from a lack of resources.

This book is a valuable resource for ECE administrators seeking to understand their role in a broader

context, for university faculty or others charged with providing professional development opportunities for directors, and for advocates and policymakers interested in raising the quality of child care in the United States. *Reviewed by Patricia F. Hearron, Professor, Child Development, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC*

**REINVENTING CHILDHOOD: Raising and Educating Children in a Changing World.** *David Elkind. Rosemont, NJ: Modern Learning Press, 1998. 188 pp. \$19.95.* *Reinventing Childhood* takes a sobering look at the multiple societal changes that are affecting children. Noted child psychologist David Elkind compares the experience of being a child during the modern era (the 1950s) with that of being a child during the postmodern era (the 1960s onward). He posits that children are being forced to grow up too fast and that their needs are no longer given precedence in the family. Consequently, today's families are raising a generation of angry, lonely, and displaced children.

Elkind contrasts this situation to the idealized family of the 1950s, when children were cared for and home was a haven, a place of peace and rest from the harshness of factory or office. Now, home is a place where each member's needs take precedence over communal family activities. Families seldom eat meals together, and the home becomes a kind of train station—with people coming and going. Elkind describes postmodern parents as living hurried, distracted lives, with little time to teach those rules of behavior so

desperately needed in school culture. "The child viewed as innocent in the modern era has been reinvented as competent—ready and able to deal with all of life's vicissitudes in the postmodern era" (p. 15), including divorce, violence, and televised sexuality.

Elkind sounds a serious alarm that concerned parents and educators need to hear. He concludes that families who value their children need to give them the tools to survive in an increasingly stressful, complex culture. *Reviewed by Jan Richards, Doctoral student/Adjunct, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA*

**PLAY AND LITERACY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: Research From Multiple Perspectives.** *Kathleen Roskos & James F. Christie, Eds. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000.* Building on an earlier text (edited by Christie, 1991), Roskos and Christie offer another selection of literacy-play research that extends earlier observations and points the reader in new directions. Twenty-nine widely acclaimed professors and researchers contributed to this significant text.

Part I, A Cognitive Perspective, links dramatic play with literacy learning, and symbolic play with phonological awareness and literacy skills. One chapter, written by Greta Fein, Ardila Rey, and Lois Groth, addresses the importance of narrative connections, and is particularly helpful in extending research into practice. The authors also provide a well-rounded Narrative Activities Inventory (NAI) to promote literacy-rich classroom activities, props, and behaviors.

Part II, An Ecological Perspective, explores the results of empirically based studies on the effects of educational interventions and home practices on children's early literacy. All three chapters in Part II demonstrate the unfortunately wide gulf between theory and prac-

tice. The authors call for social policy, legislation, and parent and teacher development that incorporate measures to bridge this gap.

Part III, A Sociocultural Approach, focuses on how community influences and implicit goals affect children's play and interpretation of the meaning and functions of literacy. The commentary for this section states that researchers and educators must conceptualize culture as an element of children's development, rather than as a variable that affects children's development. Thus, our task as educators becomes one of "negotiating the boundaries" of various home, school, and cultural practices, and transforming these practices for greater literacy/play benefits.

This text offers stimulating insight into the relationships among early play behaviors and practices and the child's acquisition of literacy. In addition, readers will more fully understand that play, itself, is a zone of proximal development (to borrow from Vygotsky) and, as such, is a learning opportunity that invites children to expand their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual boundaries. *Reviewed by Susan Trostle Brand, University of Rhode Island, Kingston*

**MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A Caring-Centered Reflective Approach.** *V.O. Pang. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001, 290 pp. \$38.75.* Valerie Ooka Pang presents a multiplicity of data on multicultural models and frameworks, many of which are clearly depicted on charts, lists, and tables. This clearly conceptualized, well-researched book should certainly be included in any serious attempt at defining and grappling with the issues of multicultural education in the 21st century.

Pang delineates six phases to follow in developing caring-centered multicultural education: understand the ethic of caring, review

and eliminate prejudice and discrimination, understand the importance of culture, learn and utilize culturally relevant teaching, blend and integrate caring and social justice into teaching and the school, and design and implement classroom and structural school change.

Pang builds her concepts on the caring-centered philosophical framework of Carl Rogers and Jerome Freiberg, who believed "that the development of strong caring relationships was key to a foundation for humanistic schools. Elements that they identified were teacher empathy, positive school climate, and trusting relationships" (p. 55).

This is a relatively short, user-friendly, dynamic book; cartoons add a bit of whimsy to an otherwise serious discourse on negotiating personal and school cultures. The book is invaluable for all those who are sincere in their attempts to understand themselves and others. *Reviewed by Frances Y. Lowden, Associate Professor, Medgar Evers College/City University of New York, Brooklyn*

**TELLING A DIFFERENT STORY: Teaching and Literacy in an Urban Preschool.** *Catherine Wilson. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000. 105 pp. \$18.95.* The size of this book leads the reader to assume that it will be a quick and easy read. In reality, this small text addresses complex issues surrounding the process of literacy learning in one inner-city preschool. The work, which is based on the author's doctoral dissertation, documents the seven months Wilson spent as a participant observer in a Head Start classroom serving children who were primarily African American and from low socioeconomic level homes.

Wilson introduces readers to Sara and Jorene, the two Head Start teachers, and then details the classroom's physical space, curricu-