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ABSTRACT

In recent years, preschool and elementary school teachers have noted increases in behavior concerns and developmental delays, possibly caused by prenatal drug or alcohol exposure. This document notes that it is more important to ascertain the children's challenges than the causes. It describes the most promising practices identified for improving the learning of children at risk, whatever the reason. These are: (1) creating a nurturing classroom environment; (2) encouraging cooperative play; (3) facilitating classroom transitions and minimizing distractions; (4) helping children manage their behaviors; (5) conducting ongoing classroom assessment; and (6) building strong ties with families. The guide features a companion videotape. (Contains 43 resources.) (HTH)

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Risk and Reality

Teaching Preschool Children Affected by Substance Abuse

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Risk and Reality

Teaching Preschool Children Affected by Substance Abuse

By Joanne P. Brady and Sharon Grollman

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Teaching Children Affected by Substance Abuse (a video and teachers' guide for elementary school staff)

Risk and Reality: Teaching Preschool Children Affected by Substance Abuse (a video and teachers' guide for preschool staff)

Helping Children Affected by Substance Abuse: A Manual for the Head Start Management Team

Teaching Head Start Children Affected by Substance Abuse: A Training Guide for Education Teams

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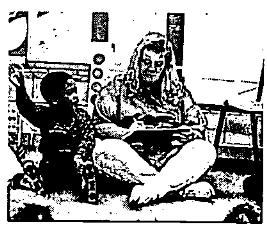

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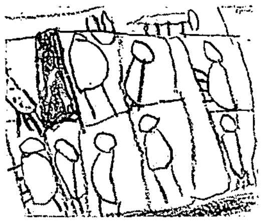

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teachers in preschool programs and elementary schools have been reporting an increasing number of children who display troubling behaviors and learning problems. These include:

- short attention span
- extreme distractibility
- difficulty coping with changes
- a higher frequency of speech and language delays and disorders, including poor articulation, limited vocabulary, and limited expressive language skills
- aggressive and disruptive behavior
- lack of social competence
- difficulty forming healthy relationships with peers and teachers

Many teachers wonder whether prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs may be causing or contributing to these problems, and what the effects of living in at-risk families and communities may be.

What Research Shows

Many studies of newborns, carried out in university hospital settings, have described the initial effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs on the young infant. Now, as increasing reports from teachers describe the behaviors observed among toddlers and preschool children, everyone wonders if these behaviors, too, are the result of prenatal exposure. Nearly 20 years of work has extensively described, on a continuum, the harmful effects that can be directly attributed to prenatal alcohol exposure. Illicit drugs are another story. Just as has been the case with other groups of children at risk, such as preterm, small-for-gestational-age children, it may be some time before conclusive data are published on the long-term impact of illicit drugs on child development.

Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol

The long-term effects on children prenatally exposed to alcohol vary widely, ranging from normal development to attention and memory deficits, distractibility and poor organization, to mental retardation. These effects appear to be related in part to the quantity and frequency of maternal alcohol consumption. On this continuum, the more serious and specific diagnoses that have evolved from this research

include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), and Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD). All of these diagnoses can involve permanent physical disabilities, cognitive impairment (ranging from minor to severe), decreased problem-solving ability, and fine and gross motor problems.

Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Other Drugs

Research findings regarding the effects of prenatal exposure to illicit drugs have also reported a continuum of outcomes although no consistent syndrome has emerged. Maternal use of illicit drugs during pregnancy can be identified on the basis of urine toxicology screens administered on both mothers and newborns following delivery (as well as on the basis of maternal self-report, although these may not be accurate).

Drug use during pregnancy is associated with an increased incidence of preterm births, small-for-gestational-age births in both preterm and fullterm infants, and smaller head circumferences in fullterm births. Opiates, such as heroin, can result in neonatal abstinence syndrome, characterized during the newborn period by irritability, tremors, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal and respiratory problems, and occasionally seizures. Although the specific effects of prenatal exposure to individual substances remain largely unknown, preterm birth, small-for-gestational-age birth, and reduced head size at birth all have been studied in other populations and have been demonstrated to interfere with long-term development in some children. Further, adverse initial effects such as those seen in newborns prenatally exposed to heroin have not been investigated over the long term, nor studied for the implications for specific

developmental areas such as fine motor skills and self-regulation.

The outcomes of existing studies vary enormously. The initial effects seen in infants may depend on the substance used, how often and how much, at what time during pregnancy, and on the kind of care the mother receives while she is pregnant. For example, inadequate prenatal care, poor nutrition, and smoking are also known to contribute to lower birthweight. So biomedical researchers can, with good reason, express concerns about the possibility of long-term effects– that is, developmental and learning difficulties that may be expected to appear in the future. They can accurately describe the infants under their scrutiny as being "at risk." They can record the week-old infant's difficulties at birth, and looking ahead, express concern that the same child—by age 3—may well carry some developmental difficulties into preschool.

However, this research has reported on risk status within groups of children, and it is important to bear in mind that no one can predict the outcome for any individual child. It remains to be seen if the longitudinal studies will find any evidence of long-term effects. In the meantime, we know that something disrupts the normal development of many children. Therefore it is also useful to take a closer look at what is known about the family and community where the child spends three or four years before enrolling in a preschool program.

Effects of Living in At-Risk Families and/or Communities

Many newborn babies leave the hospital and go home to families and neighborhoods dramatically affected by substance abuse. Instead of looking only at the drug culture

and its physiological effects on infants before they are born, we must also look at the drug culture and its effects on the families *after* the children are born. How does a parent's involvement with illicit drugs, or with alcohol, affect the child's caregiving environment? How does drug trafficking affect the community where the family lives?

A child-rearing environment that is not supportive and nurturing can have a negative impact on child development, regardless of the presence or absence of biological risk factors. Conversely, as longitudinal studies of other groups of at-risk children have shown, a supportive and nurturing environment can significantly enhance developmental outcomes.

In communities that are affected by substance abuse, violence, and poverty, a number of major environmental factors affect development before and after birth:

- low maternal weight gain during pregnancy
- lack of prenatal care
- lack of social support for the family
- inadequate caregiving skills
- exposure to family and community violence
- child abuse and neglect
- multiple foster care placements

These factors are, of course, strongly associated with poverty; the number of children living in poverty has risen substantially over the past two decades. That is not to say that these risk factors are inevitable among families living in poverty. Nor are they found exclusively in low-income families: these factors also threaten the healthy development

of children who live in middle-income or high-income families.

Even one of these factors can threaten a child's development. When they accumulate, they significantly increase the risk of language disorders, emotional difficulties, and behavior and learning problems. For children in poverty, frequently that is what happens. The behavior and learning problems reported by educators across the country are probably due to a complex constellation of risk factors and an ongoing set of interactions that take place over time. These interactions involve: (1) an infant who may be somewhat fragile at birth; (2) the vulnerability and inadequate caregiving skills of that child's family, especially if the caregivers continue to abuse alcohol or other drugs; and (3) the violence, on the streets and in the home, that is associated with drug trafficking in poor neighborhoods.

In low-income families, mothers are more likely to have low maternal weight gain and have received poor prenatal care, so their babies are born small. Fragile infants go home from the hospital with numerous (although often temporary) health problems and may be very hard to care for, to comfort and console. An infant with these problems is a challenge for any mother. When the mother herself is very young, has little education, and/or is struggling with addiction, the chances for a successful attachment between mother and child are reduced even further. Frequently, too, it is the grandmother or aunt, not the mother, who brings the baby home.

In addition to the family environment, the community also has an impact on child development. In areas where alcohol and/or drug use is widespread, there is often an increased incidence of neighborhood violence, gang activity, theft, and pressure by pushers for residents (including children) to start using drugs. All of these stressors can affect the behaviors of

family members and, in turn, the development of young children. Even a family that is healthy and functioning well is not immune. The anxiety, depression, anger, and fear that result from living in a troubled and volatile neighborhood can also harm families that are not abusing alcohol and other drugs.

Children affected by substance abuse exhibit a wide range of abilities and problems. They are not necessarily children with special needs, and labeling children as "drug-exposed" does nothing to help improve their developmental or educational prospects. Some children who have been prenatally exposed to drugs may meet the established criteria for a disabling condition set forth by state and federal regulations related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law that ensures free and appropriate education to children ages 3 to 18 with disabilities.

By carefully examining all of the contributing risk factors, educators will be able to create the kinds of programs that will best address the particular needs of children in their classrooms.

Supporting Children at Risk

Development is a dynamic process, and children and families—even in the presence of discouraging odds—can make positive changes in their lives. A good example of this is provided in a study conducted in Kauai, Hawaii, that followed high-risk infants for 30 years. This investigation found that the combination of perinatal risk and disadvantaged home environment was more devastating than perinatal risk alone. The children who had the fewest developmental problems were those who had supportive and stable caregiving from adults in their lives. Findings such as these have led to the concepts of "resiliency" and "protective factors" as described by David Hawkins and others (1985) who have looked at the conditions that help children prevail.

Clinicians and researchers observe that these protective factors reside as much in the child's world as in the child—that is, in the child's family and community. The love and support of a caring grandparent can help foster healthy development, even if a child's own parent cannot. In turn, communities can also provide support for vulnerable families. To make a difference in a child's life, programs need to support the family as well as the community where the child lives.

Early intervention that begins when the child is still very young, targeted both to the child and to the family, offers the best chance to offset children's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive problems—whatever their cause. But even if there are children in your classroom who have not received early supports, it is not too late.

While there are no "cookbooks," educators across the country who work with children at risk have reached consensus about the practices that can help them succeed in regular education settings. Children at risk need:

- *A safe and supportive classroom environment.* Teachers can create a safe and stable classroom environment by building relationships with individual children over time; fostering child-to-child relationships; and developing classroom rules and predictable routines to help children develop a sense of what to expect. Such a classroom environment provides a critical balance to the unpredictable nature of the day-to-day experiences that many children face.

- *Chances to interact, play, and learn successfully with other children.* Teachers can support children's development by creating a classroom community where children can teach and learn from each other.

- *Choices about what activities to pursue.* Teachers can help children move toward independence by creating a structured, trusting environment where children feel safe making choices. By fostering healthy decisionmaking, teachers help children develop self-esteem and a sense of inner control.

- *Assessment about their development that occurs in natural classroom situations and over time.* By understanding child strengths, interests, and learning styles, teachers can tailor

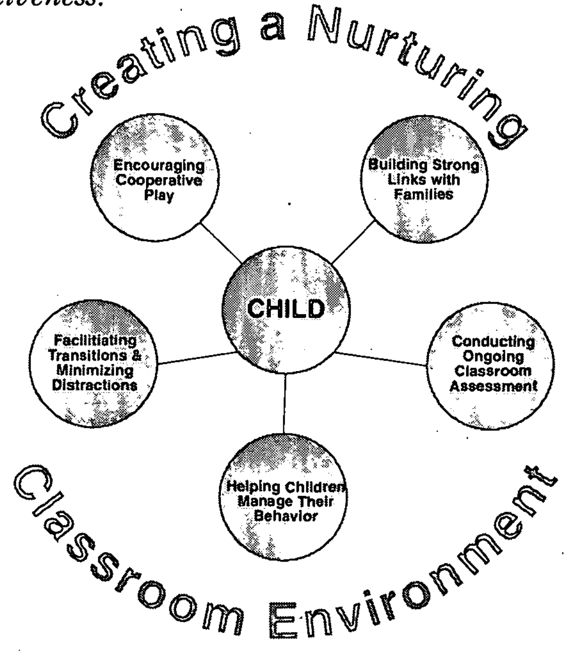
classroom activities to meet the needs of individual children. In some cases, ongoing assessment may be supplemented by formal assessments to help pinpoint a child's needs and strengths, and identify interventions that teachers can implement within the context of the regular classroom.

- *Links between their life in the classroom and their life at home.* Even the most vulnerable parents can provide teachers with valuable insights into how their children learn and play. Parents are their children's best teachers and can be important allies in their children's education.

Using This Guide

This guide translates these principles into basic practices that teachers can use. The power of these practices rests on two main assumptions: first, that teachers are committed to developmentally appropriate practice—that is, creating a classroom environment and a curriculum based on children's developmental levels and individual needs; and second, that a nurturing classroom provides the essential backdrop for every practice. Only by developing positive, respectful relationships—child to child, teacher to parent, and teacher to child—can early childhood educators build strategies that tap the strengths of individual children. In the absence of a nurturing classroom, techniques lose their effectiveness.

Six key practices are described in this guide: Creating a Nurturing Classroom Environment, Encouraging Cooperative Play, Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions, Helping Children Manage Their Behavior, Conducting Ongoing Classroom Assessment, and Building Strong Links with Families. The diagram below demonstrates how the practices evolve around the needs of each child.



The companion video illustrates many of these practices in actual classrooms across the country.

Follow-up activities, found at the conclusion of each section, will help you translate the key ideas into classroom practice.

- *The Video: Questions to Consider* offers guidelines for viewing the video and tools for adapting these practices to meet the needs of children in your classroom.
- *The Teacher Connection* provides a framework for working with other teachers and specialists to build a support network, and to collaboratively generate solutions to child problems.
- *The Family Connection* offers activities that can help children's parents and caregivers become educational allies by suggesting how they can carry out specific, developmentally appropriate activities at home.

These follow-up activities provide suggestions for evaluating and fine-tuning your own practices; these activities can be adapted to complement organized, professional opportunities offered in your locale and to meet your individual needs and the needs of your children.

Creating a Nurturing Classroom Environment

A nurturing classroom provides preschool children with a safe, secure, and predictable environment based on positive and stable relationships with teachers, specialists, and peers. Nurturing relationships communicate to children that they are valued, which is basic to healthy development. As important as a nurturing classroom is for all children, it is critical for those who have experienced flux in their lives. For some children, preschool is their only source of stability—a safe harbor they can count on.

For every strategy suggested in this guide, a nurturing classroom provides the context: it allows teachers to develop a relationship with their children, to determine what they need, and to find ways to work together to facilitate the learning process. A supportive climate is the glue that gives strategies their power; without this glue, they lose their effectiveness.

Components of a nurturing classroom include acknowledging children's individual contributions, supporting their growing independence, and fostering their connections

Children have as much at stake in creating a caring classroom community as the teacher. The learning endeavor is a partnership with the children being at the helm and the teacher working as facilitator to make sure that the boat is going in the right direction.

within the group. In such an environment, children develop the social competence and self-esteem needed to become active learners.

Beginning the Year

The first weeks of a preschool program may be unsettling for children as they encounter new faces and new rules and expectations. It may be their first experience outside their home environment. Even though the program may feel more supportive in time, the initial differences may seem overwhelming for vulnerable children who have difficulty coping with even the smallest of changes. You can ease the transition in a number of ways:

- Plan activities to personalize children's entry into your program. Send personal letters to children and their families, welcoming them to your classroom, and make home visits to establish links with families. Orient the children to the classroom individually or in small groups, using guided discovery to help prepare children for their new experience. (See the section on Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions for more information.)
- If children are entering from an early intervention program or another child-care program, contact their teachers to learn more about their strengths

in key developmental areas, how they relate to adults and peers, what activities they find comforting, and how they cope with change. If incoming children have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), consult with the specialists involved. Use the information from specialists to develop activities that match children's interests and needs.

- Lay the groundwork for positive parent involvement by meeting with parents, asking them about their child's experiences outside the home: How did they adjust to those settings? What helped them? Also ask about the child's strengths and preferences, and any steps you can take to ease the transition process. Use this time to talk about what your class is like, discuss the curriculum, and share your expectations for the class.

- The physical setup of your classroom influences children's learning and behavior. Arrange materials predictably: when materials are easily accessible and children know where to find them, you promote children's increasing sense of independence.

- Provide ample supplies of each type of material to encourage cooperative play; children are more likely to work together to build an elaborate city out of blocks when lots of them are available.

- Organize and label materials. Children with attention difficulties may feel overwhelmed by the variety of classroom materials. An organized classroom where materials are kept in labeled storage containers will reduce competing demands made on their attention. (See the section on Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions for more information on designing the physical space.)

Use the information from specialists to develop activities that match children's interests and needs.

- Find ways to make your classroom feel as homelike as possible. Include objects that are familiar and reflect children's cultural backgrounds (e.g., chopsticks in the housekeeping area) to help children develop a sense of belonging. Some teachers take photographs of children and their caregivers at the beginning of the year, then use these pictures to create a bulletin board display with children.
- Give children space that "belongs" to them, perhaps a cubby or a rug used for morning meeting. Ask children to label their personal things with pictures, photographs, and stickers.
- Develop a predictable daily schedule; use visual clues (e.g., posting a schedule using rebuses) and words to help children get a sense of the routine. Some teachers have children draw or cut out pictures to represent the day's main events (free choice, morning meeting, lunch time, etc.). Each day, the teacher hangs up the pictures to graphically illustrate what the day's events will be, and the order in which they will occur. A picture is removed once the activity has been completed. Such a technique provides children with a frame of reference for understanding and organizing their day.

Before Dawn entered the program, she never had anything that she could call her own. She shared a bed with her older sister, she didn't have a dresser, and the few toys in her house were always up for grabs. But now, she has her own cubby. At the beginning of the year, she'd visit her cubby at least five times a day, just to make sure that it was still there. That cubby means a lot to Dawn: it's her space, one that gives her a sense of permanency, and a sense of stability. When she sees that cubby, she knows that she has a place in the classroom.

- ▷ Work with children to develop a set of classroom rules (e.g., everyone must be safe, people's feelings and belongings must be respected) that are few in number and clearly and positively stated. When you invite children to participate in defining the rules, they feel more ownership, and better understand the rules and how the classroom will operate throughout the year. Post the classroom rules, using words and icons, and enforce them consistently. Teachers report that children are more likely to use the classroom rules to arbitrate their own conflicts when they feel they are part of the process.

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Beginning the Day

Making a transition from one setting to another is difficult for many children at risk. One of the most difficult transitions is beginning the preschool day. By letting children know that you are happy to see them, that you are ready to listen when they are ready to talk, you relieve their anxiety and help them make the bridge from home to preschool.

- ▷ The way you and your children launch the morning sets the tone for the rest of the day. Avoid the temptation to use children's arrival time for completing last-minute preparations. Instead, stand at the door, taking the time to individually greet children when they walk into your classroom (as well as greet parents who drop off their children). "Take the pulse" of children by paying attention to what they say and by reading their facial expressions and

body language. Address any concerns or questions children may have. If children have difficulty communicating their needs verbally, talk about your observations: "You look sad today. How about a hug?"

If children have difficulty communicating their needs verbally, talk about your observations: "You look sad today. How about a hug?"

- Conduct a morning meeting to foster a sense of community. By having children do a "group greeting" (talking about classmates who are present as well as those who are absent), you help children feel that they have a proper place in the classroom. Invite children to share their ideas and feelings (e.g., the story of the girl who is afraid of the dog on the video) and provide a model for offering feedback and praise. Some children may share, "My brother was sick," while others might reveal more personal and powerful information, such as problems in their household. Teachers need to be prepared to react to both kinds of situations. When you respond in a supportive and nonjudgemental manner (e.g., calmly asking "How did you feel? How do you feel about it now?"), children will know that they have a place to share in the classroom. In some cases, you will want to have follow-up conversations with children in private to check how they are doing; you may also consult with a specialist if you think a referral is needed.

- At the beginning of the year, morning meetings should be relatively short; long meetings increase the likelihood of disruptive behavior. If more time is needed for group sharing, consider scheduling several short meetings throughout the day.

- Another way to use the morning meeting is to help children anticipate the day's events. Announce the activities of the day, any special events that may be occurring, and who may be visiting the classroom.

Fostering Participation

You can encourage children's participation and foster their self-esteem by focusing on their strengths and recognizing their contributions. Receiving such recognition is especially important for children who do not receive such reinforcement in other areas of their life.

- ▷ Individualize expectations for each child and provide positive feedback so that success, no matter how small, is recognized. For example, if a child who has difficulty talking in group situations shares what he has done that day, let him know that you appreciate his participation.

- ▷ Develop activities that help children feel special and recognized and provide opportunities for individual children to share their culture with others. "Star of the Week" is one activity that highlights a different child each week to share his or her favorite foods, stories, toys, and games with classmates. Design some of the week's activities around the interests of the star. Invite parent participation by sending home notices and making phone calls in advance, giving possible dates that they can come into the class to help celebrate their child's week.

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- ▷ Children at risk may have difficulty making decisions and moving toward independence. In an environment where they feel safe and trusted, they will be more willing to explore the classroom and make decisions about what to play, who to play with,

and what materials to use. If children have difficulty making choices, give them a limited number of options: "What would you rather do? Play at the sand table or in the housekeeping area?" As children become more comfortable, expand the number of choices: "Where would you like to play today?" Some teachers create a choice board to facilitate the decisionmaking process (e.g., giving each child a clothespin to decorate and use to indicate his or her activity selection).

▷ Give children responsibilities that are in keeping with their developmental abilities and age, and can build their independence, skills, and feelings of self-worth. With your class, develop an illustrated job chart. Some teachers have children cut out photos for the job chart to depict classroom chores such as watering flowers, cleaning tables, and feeding fish. Rotate children through the different jobs on a weekly basis; as children begin to take on new roles, be available to provide assistance.

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Watch the video segment, *Creating a Nurturing Classroom Environment*. Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- In what ways do the teachers in the video create a nurturing classroom environment?
- What similar techniques do you use in your classroom to build child-to-child relationships? Teacher-to-child relationships? Parent-to-teacher relationships?
- How do you encourage children to express their anxieties, concerns, fears, as well as their accomplishments?

- What aspects of the physical environments shown in the video could you incorporate into your classroom?

The Teacher Connection

Meet with one or two colleagues (specialists, administrators, fellow teachers, parents, or other volunteers who work in the classroom). Use the checklist that follows to examine how you can adapt your classroom to meet the needs of children.

The Family Connection

Help parents focus on the strengths of their child, not merely their problems. One teacher used this strategy by turning an empty, clean coffee can into an "I Can" can. She began by depositing slips of paper that contained records of each child's achievements ("I can do the zoo puzzle, I can share crayons with my friends"). Then she sent the cans home so that caregivers could reinforce their children's successes by adding slips of their own. Periodically, the can was emptied so that parents and children could review the growing accomplishments.

Checklist: Adapting a Physical World for Children

You can take steps to adapt the child's physical world and manifest the characteristics essential to good programming through furniture arrangement, space and boundaries, interest areas, materials labeling and storage, and decoration. Survey your space for the following issues:

SAFE

- ☐ In a long room: some barriers that prevent it from becoming a long running track
- ☐ Barriers such as bookcases or shelving that are stable and let the teachers visually scan the entire room
- ☐ Classroom equipment and furniture that has rounded edges, no points
- ☐ A safe, fenced-in area outside that has impact-absorbing materials under climbers, slides, and swings
- ☐ Playgrounds that are checked each day for debris and broken glass or broken equipment

ENGAGING

- ☐ Gross motor activities that use up children's excess energy
- ☐ Interest areas that permit different activities and encourage choice on the part of the children

- ☐ Materials, toys, and supplies that are on shelves or in cubbies, within children's reach; this adds to children's sense of independence if they can make their own choices and get the supplies they need
- ☐ A variety of toys with plenty of each kind available, so that children just starting to share have many of one item to play with (i.e., it's better to have many of a few different kinds of toys than many different kinds but only one or two of each). This cuts down on frustration

CALMING

- ☐ Walls and floors that are painted in quiet colors
- ☐ Some walls that are bare; other walls and windows that are not overly decorated
- ☐ Barriers between areas that minimize distractions
- ☐ Carpeting in some areas to absorb sounds; in play areas, carpeting that is short enough so that blocks may be stacked without falling over and adding to children's frustration
- ☐ Sitting areas that include soft cushions
- ☐ Record player that has earphones, carefully regulated to avoid damage to hearing
- ☐ Noisy areas (woodworking, blocks) that are situated away from quiet areas (reading)
- ☐ A quiet corner, nook, cranny, or alcove; an empty refrigerator box; or a little built-in loft that provides a place within the classroom not associated with punishment, where a child can retreat for a while with a stuffed animal or a book
- ☐ Classrooms that have their own bathroom or at least their own sink where children may engage in calming water play. "Creating" with fingerpaints are fun, messy activities that allow children to let off steam

Note: Specialists can also contribute to constructive space planning.

Encouraging Cooperative Play

By observing and participating in children's play, you can gain valuable insights into how children perceive their world—what their struggles are and what they care about—and pinpoint skills that need to be developed.

All play provides preschool children with opportunities to learn more about themselves and their world, and to express their ideas and feelings. As they become developmentally ready to add cooperative play to their repertoire (along with solitary play and parallel play), children benefit from new opportunities to engage in social interaction. They learn new ways to work together as they negotiate what scenarios to play out, what roles to take, what props to use, and what direction the play will take. In addition, play provides children with an opportunity to express their concerns and fears in a safe way. *By observing and participating in children's play, you can gain valuable insights into how children perceive their world—what their struggles are and what they care about—and pinpoint skills that need to be developed.*

Many children at risk may lack the social and language skills necessary to enter into and maintain cooperative play. However, a nurturing classroom, based on the values of mutual trust and respect, can lay the groundwork for successful cooperative play experiences. Further, teachers can improve these experiences for children at risk by making some additional efforts.

Creating the Context

Cooperative play is more than an occasional event. It is a process that can (and should) occur every day throughout the program for older preschoolers. By providing multiple opportunities for children to cooperate—at morning meeting, while cleaning up, during lunch, when getting ready to go home—you can help children develop the skills they need to enjoy and benefit from cooperative play. You can also take other steps to weave opportunities for cooperative play into all aspects of your classroom.

- Create interest areas, making sure that ample space is available for children to play together. Use dividers to limit distractions. Note which areas are not used and think about how you can increase interest in these areas. Also consider which areas are used most frequently. Tape off these areas to limit the number of children who can play in a particular area at one time.
- Provide a range of materials that tie to children's interests and prompt cooperative play. Some teachers create "prop boxes" that contain costumes and props related to particular themes. For instance, a fire station prop box may contain fire hats, tubes for hoses, a steering wheel, and a

I watched the children at the beginning of the year to see where in the classroom they played the most and how many children could effectively play in each of those areas. Then I taped the floor to define the perimeter of those areas where children most often play, making different sizes and shapes so that only a certain number of children would fit in each space. This technique has minimized a lot of confusion. Nobody complains, "There are too many kids here." The children know when a space is filled and when there's a place for them. And it helps those children in each area really focus on what they're doing and what they're learning.

large cardboard box that children can transform into a fire truck. Other prop boxes could include a post office, a doctor's office, a gas station, a fast food restaurant, a farmhouse, or a shoe store. Prop boxes help children identify the play schema, while also providing them with a variety of roles to play. As you create prop boxes, include materials that engage children and extend their play.

▷ Collect large quantities of each type of material, such as blocks and recycled items, so that children just starting to share have plenty to play with.

▷ Build your daily schedule around "choice time" so that children with mutual interests can play together.

Facilitating Play

You can use your assessments about children's developmental levels, their particular interests and strengths, and their ability to engage in cooperative play to develop strategies for facilitating and sustaining play. (See the section on Conducting Ongoing Classroom Assessment, which appears later in this guidebook.)

▷ Assess each child's play style or preference. Some children prefer to explore and build on the qualities and properties of objects around them (using a tea set to create a tower; or using boxes, tubes, and beads to build a space control box or an elaborate pattern). Other children prefer to insert themselves directly into the play (taking on a dramatic role such as the mother or the bus driver) or to enact scenarios using small dolls or figures. Use your observations to create opportunities that build on children's interests and experiences.

- ▷ Assess each child's readiness to engage in cooperative play. Some children may have had little experience with play: they don't know how to organize and interact with the materials. With these children, your first task is to help them feel comfortable with the materials and explore the different things they can do with them. Asking open-ended questions ("What can we do with these blocks? What could we make?") may provide the needed "push" to get children going. If children are still reluctant, provide them with choices that link to their experiences and interests. ("Do you think we could make a space station? Or, how about a zoo?") Model ways to use the materials, talking aloud as you go. ("These blue blocks could be the gate. Now I need some red blocks to make a popcorn stand.")

- ▷ Some children may be adept at playing solo, but have trouble playing with their peers. Help these children build the skills they need to enter into play of others. For example, if a group of children is playing house, talk to the child who can't seem to find her way into the scenario. With the child, assess the situation—help her to identify the play schema, what the different roles are, and what additional roles may be needed. ("Who else might they need to play house? You're right. They don't have a babysitter to watch the children. You would be great at that.") Some teachers ask the new child to select a prop to offer when they enter a play that is "in progress." You may also assume a role in the play, modeling for others how to integrate the child into the play.

- ▷ Help children maintain and extend their play by providing a novel prop or creating a new character that could take their play in a new direction; making suggestions or asking questions to prompt children to think about new possibilities; or simply offering a little encouragement.

Some children may have had little experience with play: they don't know how to organize and interact with the materials.

Strike a balance between making suggestions and directing their play, so that children can discover new avenues for themselves. When you intervene, ask yourself if you are extending their play or interfering with it.

- When troublesome themes appear in children's play, do not interrupt the play schema. Instead, be willing to take on a role. For example, if a child is hitting her "baby" against the stove, pretend you are a little girl and say, "Mommy, you're really angry. How come?" Take notes about these play episodes, objectively describing what the child says and does and how you respond. If these types of themes persist, share your observations with your administrator, your team, or a mental health specialist who works with your program.
- Help parents understand that play is the work of children. Use drop off and pick up times as opportunities to show parents how their own children are developing through play: "Mark has been absorbed in play for at least 20 minutes. Without any help, he and Millie figured out to tie the 'bundles' onto their flatbed trailer with a jump rope. They've been planning what route they're going to take to transport their cargo. And they've been practicing new words they learned during story time."

Since coming into the classroom, I've learned to communicate with my daughter in a whole new way. At first I'd observe the class and think, "What's going on?" I didn't really understand. Now I realize that what I used to see as play is really a learning process, and I've learned to become part of that process.

Affirming Children's Play

You can show that you value children's play in a number of ways.

- Encourage children to share what they have done. Ask questions to trigger a discussion about what they did, how they approached the task, and what they liked about it.

- Document what children have done. Represent children's play with written descriptions or diagrams; take photographs of their work; or record their play interactions on audiotape. Display children's work (or their representations) in a prominent place in your classroom. Use these records to remind children what they have done and to encourage them to revisit and extend their play.

- Use children's play as the basis for extending what they are learning. A city of blocks could be a jumping off point for talking about the properties of objects—shapes, colors, and number concepts. ("How many blocks do you think you used all together? How many rectangle blocks are there? Which tower is the shortest? Which is the tallest?")

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Watch the video segment *Encouraging Cooperative Play.* Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- What techniques do the teachers in the video use to foster cooperative play?

- How could you use similar and additional techniques to promote positive peer interaction and cooperative play?

- How can you use child assessments to create interest areas in your classroom that capitalize on children's interests and strengths?

The Teacher Connection

Choose a child in your classroom who has difficulty engaging in cooperative play. Perhaps this child is withdrawn; or perhaps the child's inability to focus and erratic behavior prevent participation.

Meet with a colleague to brainstorm what steps you can take to foster the child's participation. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- Which materials does the child particularly enjoy?
- What other classmates would complement this particular child's style and temperament?
- How could you help the child enter into cooperative play? In what ways could you help the child maintain the play?

The Family Connection

Host a parent night featuring their children's play. Show slides or a videotape of children at play, or share children's recorded play interaction on audiotape. Using children's play as the centerpiece, pose questions to parents to help them to assess the play: "What are the children doing here? How are they using the materials? How are they problem-solving together? What are they figuring out through their play?" Talk about the importance of having children be in control of their own scenarios and what parents can do to be more playful themselves. Have parents brainstorm what materials prompt children's play, and ways they can support the development of

Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions

Making transitions and focusing on the activity at hand are two interrelated challenges for many children at risk. Often these children are disorganized and easily distractible; they have no internal framework, no "gyroscope" to help organize themselves or their environment. They move from object to object and place to place, and have difficulty completing any given task. While this affects their ability to manipulate materials and learn, it also affects their ability to participate in group activities. If someone enters the room or if too many things are on the wall, they simply lose their concentration and cannot refocus on the task at hand. As a result, they may become restless and aimlessly wander around the classroom. These behaviors may cause other children to become distracted as well. Understandably, children who are distractible also have difficulty making transitions that occur during the day, such as getting settled in the morning, or switching from one activity to another. Even changes that most children would find welcoming, such as a field trip to the zoo or a class party, can be perceived by others as a frightening experience.

Use guided discovery as a way to introduce new materials to children.

Predictability of the daily schedule, consistency within and across staff, and firm boundaries will all help children organize their environment.

Organizing Space and Materials

Children who are distractible and have difficulty managing transitions need space that cuts down on the competing demands made on their attention. You can organize your classroom and display materials to meet the needs of children with attention difficulties in a number of ways.

- Design a physical environment that promotes social interaction and also includes quiet and soothing areas that are not associated with punishment. Designate an area—a quiet alcove, or a little built-in loft—where one or two children can retreat when they need some quiet time. Situate noisy areas (woodworking) away from quiet areas (book corner).

- Use physical barriers (low wall dividers and tape on the floor) to create areas that are well-defined. Decorate interest areas with visual cues (pictures, posters, and signs) to provide cues about which activities take place in each location and how many children can work there.

- Use guided discovery as a way to introduce new materials to children. Some teachers put new materials in a decorated cardboard "mystery box." During the morning meeting, the helper of the day takes out the box and shows its contents to the class. The teacher helps children explore the materials by asking questions that leads to group problem solving. For example, one teacher put a garlic press in the mystery box. During the morning meeting she asked children, "What do you think this is? Who might use

it? How could we use it in the classroom? Where do you think it belongs in the classroom?" She demonstrated how to use the garlic press to make "spaghetti" out of clay; then she invited children to experiment with the garlic press using different colored clay.

- Organize materials so that children who are distractible do not feel overwhelmed. Label items and put them away in boxes; arrange the materials so that children know where to find them and can access them easily. Carefully choose which materials to display; occasionally rotate these materials to keep interest areas engaging.

Developing Transition Activities

Switching from one activity to another often leads to confusion and frustration for vulnerable children. By developing thoughtful transition steps, so that the transition becomes an activity in itself, you will help children make the bridge more easily.

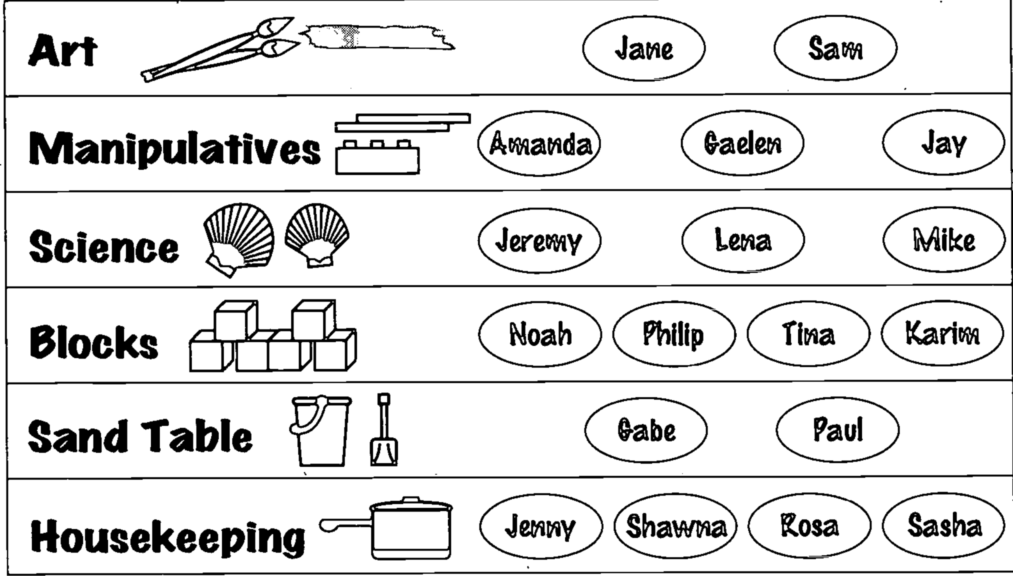
- Plan a daily schedule that is predictable, with activities of appropriate length. Some children need to see as well as hear about the sequence of events. Post the schedule with picture cues in a visible place in the room. During the day, help children refer to the posted schedule to help them organize themselves.

- Keep transitions to a minimum by structuring your schedule so that longer blocks of time are spent in the classroom. When it is time to make transitions, create a flow so that children have something to do until their turn comes to move on, and they don't have to wait for long stretches.

- ▷ Talk aloud. If you're going on a nature walk, talk about it—the route you're going to take, who you are going to see, what might happen. By constantly translating facts and explaining what they mean, you help your children anticipate.

- ▷ Use multi-modal signals to prepare children with different learning styles for upcoming transitions. Use verbal cues (telling a children there are five more minutes to finish building before lunch); visual cues (referring to the posted schedule); auditory cues (playing soft music); and body language (holding up your hand) to signal change. Some teachers use a transition board or choice chart like the one shown below to help children track their "path" during the course of the day; each time children move to a different area of the classroom, they move an icon on the board (a decorated piece of Velcro™ or a clothespin with their name) to indicate where they are in the classroom.

- ▷ Develop transition activities to help children switch gears for a new activity. Some teachers ask children to touch their



toes with their pinkies to show that they are ready for the next activity. Other teachers call all the children wearing blue shirts to line up first, then children wearing red to line up next. Still others make "footprints" or use tape to make railroad tracks on the floor so that children know where to "line up for the train" headed for the playground.

- Some children do not respond to group cues. For these children, develop individualized cues and coach them through transitions. There are a variety of strategies you can use; the ones you choose will depend on the child's individual style and cultural background. Use clear communications with simple, one-step instructions that specify the task to be accomplished; avoid giving too many directions at once. Gradually, you can increase the number of steps. Ask children to repeat your directions as a way to check their understanding. Direct them to watch another child who is using a successful strategy. For some children, good eye contact, close proximity between teacher and child, and hearing their names helps them focus.

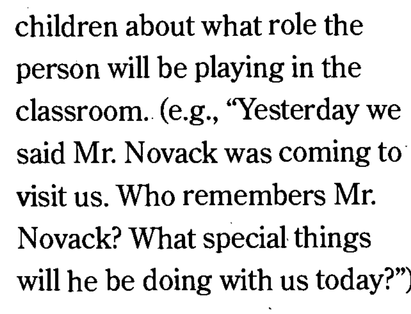
Ensuring Predictability of Staff

Predictability is the key to ensuring a smooth transition, not only from one activity to another, but from one adult to another. You can place a special emphasis on predictable patterns of staff behavior and routines in a number of ways.

When children at risk begin to build connections with teachers and other staff members, those connections must be respected. Adults are not interchangeable; and every effort must be made to ensure continuity of care over time. Only then will children begin to feel that the world is a trusting and good place; only then will children begin to trust themselves and take the risks necessary for learning.

- ▷ Develop a handout for specialists and parents who work in the room. The handout should spell out the ground rules for incoming visitors (how adults are introduced), outline the daily routines with special attention to facilitating transitions, and provide tips for engaging children and helping them feel comfortable with new faces. Review the handout with incoming adults before they work in the classroom.

- ▷ Take pains to prepare children ahead of time for new faces (consultants or parents). Prior to the visitor's arrival, talk to children about what role the person will be playing in the classroom. (e.g., "Yesterday we said Mr. Novack was coming to visit us. Who remembers Mr. Novack? What special things will he be doing with us today?")



Marlene F. Nelson

- ▷ As much as possible, create a stable and familiar cadre of substitute teachers. Notify children in advance if you know you are going to be absent on a certain day. One teacher makes audiotapes for her children to listen to in her absence. On the tape, she explains the types of activities they'll be doing with the substitute and reassures them that she'll be back the next day.

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Watch the video segment *Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions*. Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- In what ways do the teachers in the video facilitate transitions and minimize distractions?

- What similar and additional techniques could you use to reduce competing demands made on children's attention in terms of room arrangement? Introducing new materials to children? Displaying and storing materials in the classroom?

- What transition activities shown in the video could you use to help children shift from one activity to another?

- How can you coach those children in your classroom who do not respond to group cues through transitions?

The Teacher Connection

Staff, as well as children, need to be able to anticipate changes in the schedule—what special events will be taking place, who might be visiting the program—and participate in planning for these changes. Get together with other teachers. Invite site supervisors and other staff to work with you to examine the operations of the program, its impact on staff and children, and strategies for creating more predictable routines. Together, consider the following questions:

- Do teachers feel in control of their own schedules?

- Are staff involved in the planning of events that affect the whole program?

- Are staff given choices about whether their class will participate in an event?

- Are staff given ample notice when special events are occurring?

- Is there a predictability in the daily schedule?
- Are adequate arrangements made for substitute teachers?

Also examine your program's physical space and modify it where you can to create a safe and calm atmosphere. Consider not only the rooms themselves, but also the space and customs of the building: traffic patterns in the hallways, bells, and if there are congregating patterns when children wait to be picked up. If your program is a large one, work with other staff to study the traffic patterns and systems used throughout. Ask a volunteer or student-intern to "walk side-by-side" with different staff members and record what happens, when, and why. You, along with your administrator, may see opportunities to change the way things are, even if conditions have always been that way. Once you pinpoint changes you would like to make, consider who else in the program needs to be involved.

The Family Connection

Making the transition from home to preschool at the beginning of the day, or back to home later in the day, is often difficult for children. Provide parents with some suggestions for making these transition times easier. For example, parents may expect a child to be ready to go home the moment they walk through the door even if the child is still immersed in play. Model for parents ways to avoid the "transition battle" by warning children before transitions are made and assuring children that they can continue their play the next morning. Some teachers encourage children to make STOP signs to let others know to leave the materials intact for the following day. In addition to providing examples of the strategies you use for facilitating transition, ask parents what techniques they use at home that you could incorporate into your classroom.

Helping Children Manage Their Behavior

The combination of stressors that families face affect the capacity of every program to be responsive to needs of children. When children arrive at preschool tired, sick, or hungry, their ability to participate becomes limited. Some children may be shy and withdrawn, reluctant to venture out on their own and explore. Other children cannot manage their own behaviors; aggression may be the only way they know to exert control over their environment. Consequently, they may have difficulty forming relationships with peers and adults.

You can promote positive interaction and help children develop internal control by creating clear standards of expected behavior and a respectful classroom environment that allows children to communicate their needs and exercise their decisionmaking abilities.

Helping Children Identify and Express Their Feelings

Children's lack of internal control may be compounded by language and speech delays, such as language-processing problems, poor articulation, limited vocabulary, and limited expressive language skills. When children lack adequate verbal skills, behavior may be their dominant means of communication. If a child is unable to say, "I was playing with that!" hitting may seem to be the next best solution. You can help children identify and successfully communicate their feelings in a number of ways.

- Set the tone that it is okay for children to talk about feelings and personal experiences by sharing some of your own.
- Help children to identify and articulate their feelings by labeling emotions and exploring them through role playing and conversation. Use open-ended questions, comment positively on their responses, repeat their responses, and demonstrate positive recognition for improvement.
- Use "bibliotherapy," a technique that involves using literature as a way to help children identify and explore feelings. Numerous bibliographies of children's books are now available; these resources can serve as useful guides in selecting books that reflect the issues your children are

Jerome came into the program with very little language. Sometimes I barely got a "hi" out of him, and that seemed to be the extent of his verbal repertoire. I do a lot of work with puppets. One day I accidentally left Waffles, a rabbit puppet, on the floor. Jerome discovered Waffles and I discovered Jerome as he confided in a fluffy rabbit—he told Waffles that he didn't like going home, but that he liked Waffles, and that he was like Waffles, too, because he loved preschool. After that, I used Waffles as a way to communicate with Jerome.

dealing with. Encourage children to talk about how different story characters feel, how they cope with their situations, and what they learn. Such discussions can help children realize that they are not alone, that their feelings are natural, and that it is okay to share their feelings with others.

- Provide multiple opportunities for children to express their ideas and feelings verbally and nonverbally. Children who have difficulty talking about their emotions may discover new avenues of self-expression in the creative arts (music, drama, art, movement). Observe children to identify effective means of expression.

Redirecting Behavior

Some behaviors consume the time and energy of teachers—when children are willfully resistant, when they destroy their own work or the work of others, or when they strike out at classmates, seemingly with no provocation. By viewing behavior as a form of communication—a response to internal or external stimuli—you can identify cues and patterns, and design strategies that allow children to develop a sense of internal control to prevent these behaviors from occurring.

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- When children "break the rules," restate firmly and calmly what the rules are: "We

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do not hit others in this classroom, and my job is to make sure that this room is a safe place for everyone." With some children, it is most effective to state the rules assertively and stop the behavior, then discuss it later, once they have regained their composure. Too much conversation at the moment may have little impact on a young child who is not ready to reason and verbalize his or her feelings and thoughts.

- Let children know how their behavior affects their relationships with their peers: "What did Nicky do when you kicked him? Do you really want other children to run away from you?"
- Highlight the logical consequences of events. That is, work with children to create consequences that are connected to the behavior. For example, if a child throws a chair across the room, the child must pick up the chair and put it back

CASE **I was on the other side of the room when I saw Marissa punch Paul hard in the belly. I went to them—not to punish, but to problem-solve. I rubbed Marissa's back; if I didn't, I knew she'd dart. "Why did Paul get hit?" I asked. Marissa looked at the floor. "Does Paul know why?," I probed. Paul glanced at Marissa. "I don't know," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "Why don't you ask her?," I suggested. Paul followed my suggestion. "You took my pencil," she said "and you didn't give it back." "Did you ask Paul to give your pencil back?," I asked. "No. He took it," Marissa replied. I continued to lead Paul and Marissa through this dialogue. After Paul told Marissa he took it by accident, they finally came to an agreement: Next time Paul took Marissa's pencil (or anything else), Marissa would say it was hers and ask for it back, without resorting to punching and kicking. Marissa and Paul both gained a better sense of the other's thoughts and reactions, and we were able to explore alternative forms of behavior. If I had removed Marissa from the situation, that never could have happened.**

in its place. If a child uses a scissors like a sword, the child loses the privilege to use the scissors.

- ▷ Use the classroom rules as a way to frame discussions; address the problems openly and involve children in generating their own solutions.

- ▷ Provide children with alternatives. If a child does not feel ready to join the group on a particular day, give him or her permission to play quietly in another area. When you accept and validate children's feelings, they become more aware of their own needs, and in turn, more sensitive to the needs of others.

- ▷ Comment on behaviors. If a child is not able to participate during a morning meeting, you can tell other children, "He's not ready yet" or "She's not ready now." When a program truly feels like a community, other children in the classroom can provide support for children with challenging behaviors by articulating how certain behaviors make them feel and by modeling how to deal with frustration. When problems or conflicts arise during the day, address them openly and enlist support from your children by inviting them to be problem-solvers along with you.

- ▷ Redirect behaviors. If a child spits on a friend, say, "You cannot spit on your friends, but you can spit in the sink." If they swear, give them a place to do it so that other children are not disturbed. Ignore their swearing while they're in the designated area, then let children know that when they are ready to stop, they can rejoin the class. You will help children build impulse control by praising them each time they successfully handle a situation.

- ▷ Ignore behaviors that do not interfere with a child's participation, such as humming, or holding onto a piece of

cherished blanket, or some other comfort toy; children often use behaviors such as these to calm themselves or to instill a sense of control into the activity they are pursuing.

When choosing a buddy, consider not only the individual's skills, but personality and temperament as well.

- The challenging behaviors that you witness in the classroom are likely to challenge family members at home, too. Ask parents about the behaviors that children are exhibiting at home and what techniques are most effective in managing those behaviors. Acknowledge the frustration they may feel and explore how they can channel that energy in more positive ways. Then describe the strategies that you are using in the classroom and suggest how they can be incorporated into their regular routines at home (e.g., setting realistic limits, redirecting behavior, praising children when they do well). Some teachers use a "blue book," which is sent home to parents on a regular basis, to report on the child's progress. Parents then have an opportunity to respond, articulating their concerns and sharing information.

- Provide children who need special supports with peer mentors and buddies (older children or other teachers) to facilitate more acceptable social behavior. When choosing a buddy, consider not only the individual's skills, but personality and temperament as well. The buddy must be able to respond to the particular needs of the child and have the patience to nurture the child with unconditional acceptance.

- Seek assistance. A nurturing and well-organized environment is not always enough to overcome a child's difficulties. In these instances, consult with a preschool administrator. Share your observations about the child's strengths and weaknesses, pinpointing areas of concern. Request technical assistance: a consultant who can come

CASE When Andre first came into our child care program, he had no sense of inner control. He'd kick. He'd bite. He'd spit. He'd stand on tables. He'd knock down what other children had built. He couldn't play with other children. He couldn't join our morning meeting—he'd just dart out the door.

We created a buddy system to give him the one-to-one relationship he had sorely missed. Theresa is a teacher with a lot of patience. Andre didn't push her buttons the way he had with other teachers. Arrangements were made so that the first hour of each day, Theresa was Andre's special friend. Every day she was the one who would greet him at the door. She would pick a game that she thought he would like. With time, he began saying "yes" to things. Sometimes he'd even suggest activities that they could do together. At the beginning, Andre would only stay close to Theresa. Gradually, he began to leave her side to join other children with their activities. But even then, he'd still look over his shoulder to make sure Theresa was there.

When there's a sudden transition, when a teacher is absent, he will still fall apart. But Andre has changed. He can listen; he can think before he lashes out; his attention span has increased; he is moving toward cooperative play. It has been a metamorphosis.

into your classroom to observe the child in a variety of situations (at morning meeting, during free play) and offer feedback about approaches that might be more effective.

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Watch the video segment *Helping Children Manage Their Behavior.* Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- Andre's story illustrates how a buddy system can provide a child with the needed structure and support. Which children in your classroom could benefit from

such a system? How can you work with parents, volunteers, or other teachers to develop a buddy system for these children?

- What other techniques shown in the video could you incorporate into your classroom to help children manage their behavior?

The Teacher Connection

Meet with some colleagues. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- When children in your classroom exhibit challenging behaviors, how do you help them redirect their behavior? How do you encourage them to work together to negotiate their own conflicts? How can you use books as a way to help children understand the feelings of others as well as their own? What are your favorite books for these purposes?
- How can you build a buddy system for yourselves, for times when you feel as if you need some time out? What systems could you put in place? For example, can another teacher or a teacher's aide take over for a little while so you can regain your composure?
- Sometimes you may feel that even your best attempts to help a child manage his or her behaviors are not working. In these cases, how do you involve the child's parents or caregivers? What specialists can you turn to for advice and support? What steps can you take to get the targeted help that the child needs?

The Family Connection

Use books as a way to help parents and children talk about feelings. Have children take home a book or poem that

explores feelings. For example, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, by Judith Viorst (1972), describes the very bad day of young Alexander who gets more and more frustrated as the day goes on. The picture book, *Feelings* by Aliki Branderberg (1984), offers children a small catalog of feelings. Have children read the story with parents. If parents have difficulty with English, encourage parents and children to look at the pictures and talk about what is happening on each page. Include follow-up questions for parents and children to discuss together, (e.g., What makes the characters in the story happy? What makes you happy? What makes the characters in the book angry? What makes you angry? When you are having a bad day, what things can you do to feel better?)

Along with the discussion questions, send home a letter to parents about the importance of discussing feelings with children and tips for helping children to identify and express different emotions.

Conducting Ongoing Classroom Assessment

Ongoing classroom assessment can prevent children from being prematurely labeled.

Assessment is a process that begins on the first day of the program and continues throughout the year. Many preschool teachers are now using forms of assessments that gather observational data about children across developmental domains. These include anecdotal records that focus on children's interaction with the learning environment and each other; portfolios that are actual collections of children's work over time; self-assessments made by children about their own learning process; and interviews with parents. Such assessments are particularly useful, especially for children who have experienced multiple risks. Many of these children have the same abilities as their peers, but often their behavior and language-processing problems get in the way. Ongoing classroom assessment can prevent children from being prematurely labeled; help teachers to pinpoint children's strengths and weaknesses; and enable teachers to share information with specialists and parents to monitor and support children in mainstream settings. It also encourages teachers to actively involve children in documenting and reflecting on their own progress.

Using a Variety of Tools to Assess Child Growth

Structure regular periods of observation and use different assessment tools to assist with program planning.

- Observe children in a variety of situations. Watch how they handle transitions, what activities they enjoy, what materials they prefer, their style of learning, how they play with their peers and interact with adults. Notice their particular areas of difficulty as well as special talents and interests.
- Use index cards or a loose-leaf notebook to record daily observations: be nonjudgemental and specific. Include details that capture the child's method at arriving at solutions, as well as the child's attitudes and interactions with the learning environment. Date each observation. As you make your observations, focus on the child as his or her own yardstick.
- Develop portfolios—a collection of children's work across a series of domains to serve as qualitative, performance-based portraits of individual children and pinpoint their difficulties and strengths. Include a range of materials: drawings, paintings, or collages; photos of "perishable" works such as blocks or clay constructions; photos of children engaged in climbing or creative movement; and a child's dictated comments about a field trip. Include a chart about a child's choices of activities over a span of time, and notes from parent-teacher meetings.
- Engage children in the assessment process. Ask children open-ended questions about their work—what

Marlene F. Nelson

Noah and I were reviewing his portfolio filled with drawings of orange squares topped with blue circles. "Which is your favorite?" I asked him. He flipped through his pictures until he found just the right one. "That one," he said with conviction. "That one" looked the same to me as all the others so I asked why it was special to him. "Don't you see? It's the shading," he said. "It's just right." I realized then that what I had originally discounted as repetitive behavior was actually a purposeful, important activity. And from that conversation, I gained a new appreciation of his work—and I was able to become a participant in the process of helping him to explore different possibilities.

they enjoyed, what they found difficult, and what they are most proud of. Ask children to select their favorite work and add it to their portfolios.

- Invite children to review their portfolio with you periodically so they can see where they started at the beginning of the year and how much they have grown. The portfolio displays, graphically, the journey the child has taken.

- Recognize that parents are valuable sources of information. Ask parents about the interests of their children, how they spend their time at home, what motivates them, and what activities they find comforting. Set up parent meetings or home visits at the beginning of the year to learn more about the children. Discuss curriculum goals and find ways to involve parents as educational allies. If English is not their primary language, recruit someone who can serve as an interpreter. Set up regular times to meet with parents during the year to discuss the progress that children have made and to review the child's portfolio.

Using Assessments to Individualize Instruction

By continually assessing children's social and problem-solving skills in the context of the classroom activities, and reviewing your records on a regular basis, you will be able to create a classroom environment that meets the needs of individual children. If children have had formal assessments, meet with the specialists involved to pinpoint specific learning problems and identify additional strategies that you can use to facilitate learning.

- ▷ Design goals for children that are behavior based and not "label" or etiology based. By knowing what each child needs, you can provide the supports that allow each child to experience success.
- ▷ Break down activities to make them more manageable and engaging for children who have difficulty concentrating. For example, instead of "How many shapes can you see?," say, "Walk around the room and see how many circles you can find. Now, see how many squares can you find."
- ▷ Begin with familiar activities, capitalizing on what children already know. Gradually introduce new activities and materials. Whenever possible, provide opportunities for multisensory and hands-on learning (e.g., using cooking as

Laura had just learned to count to ten and she was really proud. "Now I'm going to draw ten stars," she told me. I knew that drawing ten stars would be a real stretch for her—five would be pushing it—and I wanted to help her break down the task so she wouldn't feel as if she had fallen short of her goal. "That's a lot," I said. "What if you started with one?" She agreed and went to her drawing. Later, I went to check in with her. "Wow," I said, amazed. "You drew more than one. You drew two!" She smiled. She felt like a star.

Just as assessment is an ongoing process, so is the process of individualizing activities to meet children's needs.

a way to teach about measurements, or using children's drawings as a way to learn about colors).

- Tailor activities to match the child's learning style and needs. For example, one teacher adapted mealtime to meet the diverse needs of his children. He provided adaptive equipment—a plate with a suction cup that sticks to the table, and a bent spoon—to make eating an easier task for a child with cerebral palsy. Two sets of this "dinnerware" were ordered so that other children could use them as well. He asked a child who was just learning English to teach other children the names of the foods they were eating in his native language; on certain occasions, he involved small groups of children in preparing the child's traditional recipes. Just as assessment is an ongoing process, so is the process of individualizing activities to meet children's needs.

- Create interest centers in your classroom that tie into the learning styles and interests of the children. One teacher created an interest center devoted to earthworms when she discovered her children's fascination with them. This center provided a spectrum of experientially based activities: materials invited children to paint worms at the easels and make worms with clay (kinesthetic/fine-motor skills); match and count worms (visual discrimination); measure worms (science and math); and decorate worm puppets and use them to create worm plays with their friends. This study of worms extended beyond the classroom. Children caught and observed real worms, created a worm farm, and used their experiences as the basis for creative dramatics and movement.

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Watch the video segment *Conducting Ongoing Classroom*

Assessment. Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- What types of strategies do the teachers in the video use to identify children's strengths and weaknesses?
- How could you use similar and additional techniques to target skills and accomplishments you want children to develop?
- How do you involve children and their families in the assessment process?
- How can you use assessments to tailor activities to meet the needs of children with behavior and learning problems?

The Teacher Connection

A number of formal assessments and checklists are available for recording a child's level of mastery in a given area. (See the Resources at the end of this guide.) Work with other teachers to review and rate each checklist in terms of:

- Appropriateness (Is it developmentally appropriate; that is, are the measures based on children's developmental levels?)
- Accessibility (Is it easy to use? Once filled out, will it be readily understood by specialists and parents?)
- Usefulness (Will the information capture a child's learning style? Particular interests? Areas of strength? Skills that need to be developed? Are children rated across a range of developmental domains?)

After comparing the pros and cons of each checklist, choose one to use in your classroom. Report back to the group about its effectiveness.

Building Strong Links with Families

Even the most vulnerable parents can provide teachers with important clues about how their child functions best.

Parents at risk may seem less receptive to teachers' invitations to become informed and involved in their children's education. But discounting parents will only widen the gulf between the preschool and the family and the true victims will be the children. In order to affect the lives of children, preschools and families need to work together as allies with a common goal—the future of the children. In cases in which parents are not the sole caregivers, programs can involve the grandparent, foster parent, aunt, uncle, older sibling, or cousin. Family values, methods of interaction, and cultural influences should all be considered.

Building alliances with families is a gradual process, one that takes time and requires an active, sometimes aggressive kind of effort. But the payoffs are high. Even the most vulnerable parents can provide teachers with important clues about how their child functions best, what triggers acting-out behaviors, what controls them, what their children like to play, when they're doing well, and when they are hiding their potential. Family perspectives are not merely legitimate, they are critical.

Laying the Groundwork

Creating a nurturing community is important for parents, as well as for children. Take steps at the beginning of the preschool year to let parents know that their participation is welcome and needed, and that you are interested in having them share their expertise as well as their concerns.

- Identify children's primary caregivers. Introduce yourself to them (by letter, phone call, or home visit) and welcome them to your program. Let them know that you are glad that their child will be in your class and that they can come in anytime to observe or participate in the day's activities.

- Arrange parent-teacher conferences at the beginning of the year to engage parents around the needs of their children. Make arrangements to provide onsite babysitting services for children and their siblings during this time. When speaking with parents, be a listener and acknowledge them as the experts. Ask about their children: their interests, how they spend their time at home, what they are good at, how they play with their peers, and what any past experiences with programs have been like. Identify any concerns parents may have and assess family needs.

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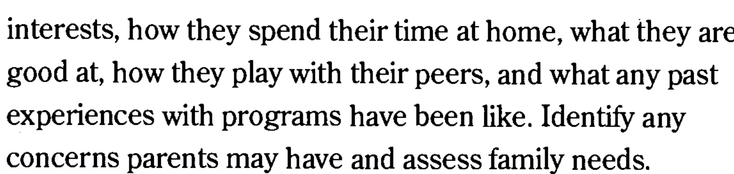

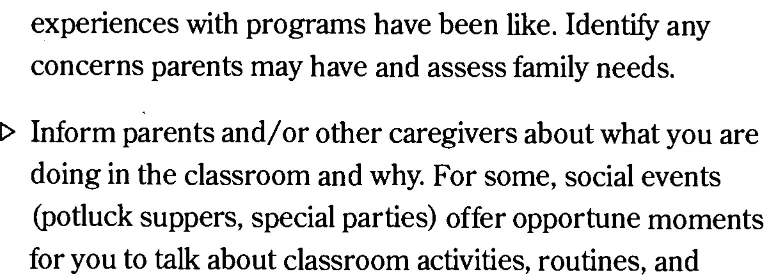

- Inform parents and/or other caregivers about what you are doing in the classroom and why. For some, social events (potluck suppers, special parties) offer opportune moments for you to talk about classroom activities, routines, and curriculum goals, and invite parents' participation. Conduct

I always had this fear. She's the teacher and I'm the parent. And I'd think, "Who does my son belong to? Will she teach him the things I want him to learn?" But she made me feel as if I was a friend, that I could talk to her, and I didn't have to worry about feeling stupid. When you have that kind of relationship, you become co-parents and co-teachers. Now I realize that I'm a teacher, too. We're not all that different.

a "back to preschool" night so that parents can explore the child's learning environment and experience firsthand the importance of certain activities and ways to promote their use at home. For others who are unable to attend these events, messages in the form of telephone calls, notes, or audiotapes sent home about class activities open the door to communication. If parents don't speak English, find someone to help you translate a letter or make an audiotape in the parents' language.

Conduct a "back to preschool" night so that parents can explore the child's learning environment.

- ▷ Provide parents with multiple opportunities to volunteer. Make direct appeals for their time; actively match specific volunteer activities with specific parents. Some programs send home checklists at the beginning of the year, describing how parents' skills can be used (e.g., reading to children in the classroom, making toys or games, stuffing envelopes, being a buddy for an incoming family, sharing their traditions, planning activities, etc.) and follow-up with a phone call. Acknowledge their contributions: convey your appreciation verbally or through handwritten notes.
- ▷ Solicit a parent representative, an individual who will act as a liaison between you and parents of children in your classroom. The parent representative's responsibilities may include: notifying parents about dates of upcoming activities and events; soliciting volunteers who can assist with classroom projects; exploring parent's needs (rides to

meetings, child care, etc.) and helping to facilitate meeting those needs; and encouraging caregivers who may be hesitant to participate to become more involved in program activities. Parents who have had negative school experiences themselves may be more willing to communicate with a fellow parent than with preschool personnel.

- ▷ Develop outreach activities. If parents do not show up for parent-teacher conferences or for the orientation sessions, do not assume that they are disinterested. Find ways to reach them. If parents are uncomfortable meeting at the preschool, make a home visit or meet at a community center, a church, or even a fast-food restaurant in their neighborhood.
- ▷ Ask parents who are actively involved in the program to be "buddies" or "mentors" for families at risk. Mentors may make home visits to establish connections with families and serve as an intermediary for the program. Such a system builds self-esteem in the "mentor," while providing a model for parents at risk.

I used to get really angry when parents couldn't get their children to preschool on time or when permission slips sent home never came back signed. I'd think, "These parents are not even trying. Don't they care?" Then I went to this workshop on effective approaches for involving high-risk families and the dynamics of addiction and recovery. At the workshop, a panel of parents spoke about their own lives—what led them to abuse alcohol and other drugs, the impact of substance abuse on their children, and what teachers did to support their children and their families during the recovery process. Their stories made me realize that children do love their families and their families love them—and that I had to continually reach out to families to draw them in.

Involving Families in Their Child's Education

All children want to know that someone is there for them.

Parents are the principal influence on their children's education and development, as well as their primary nurturers and protectors. As the stressors that affect families increase, parents often doubt their own capacity and question their skills. Parents of all children— but particularly parents of children at risk—can benefit from guidance that offers realistic ways for them to act in partnership with teachers and support their children's learning.

- ▷ Invite families to attend a class breakfast or potluck dinner to see their children perform. Teachers report that when children are in the spotlight, even very high- risk families will attend. Involve the children in making the invitations, preparing the food, and hosting the event. Encourage them to give family members a guided tour of the classroom and explore the materials with them. As you plan these events, consider the logistics. Provide onsite child care or invite the siblings to attend. If transportation is a problem, find parents and/or staff who are willing to drive other parents to and from activities. Schedule events at times convenient for parents to attend (during the day before older children get home, in the evening after dinner, or on the weekend) to ensure greater participation. Develop a parent's needs assessment or informally check in with parents to find out the best times for them to attend. If you know that a parent will not be participating, ask who else might be able to come, such as an older sibling, a grandparent, or even a specialist with whom the child has developed a special relationship. All children want to know that someone is there for them.
- ▷ Involve parents in setting realistic expectations for their children—understanding the limits of what three year olds

and four year olds can (and cannot) do, having fewer but consistent household rules. Stress the importance of predictability. Convey through modeling as well as conversation more positive ways to interact with children.

- ▷ Encourage parents to give their children responsibilities at home and offer suggestions for turning household chores into learning activities (e.g., counting out silverware or matching socks).
- ▷ Teach parents about classroom assessment; in time, they will become active partners in observing and recording their child's development.
- ▷ Involve parents in make-and-take activities that they can also do at home to engage the child's interest and spur development (e.g., games to play that encourage language development and creative expression).

Tyler needed structure, and that was something he didn't have. At home, he watched TV for hours. He had no regular bedtime. He ate whenever and wherever he wanted. There was no such thing as a family dinner. And it showed in the classroom. Mealtime was particularly difficult. So I talked to his mother and asked if we could have lunch together with Tyler. One day, over tuna fish sandwiches and carrot sticks, I modeled how to provide Tyler with the structure that he needed: I sat close to him, I told him what we would be eating, explained what the rules were, that when he was done eating he could ask to be excused and quietly play with puzzles. When he started kicking the leg of his chair that was a signal to me that he was going to lose it, so I leaned over and gave him a hug—and he regained his composure. Then Tyler went off to his puzzles and Tyler's mom and I talked about what happened and the different strategies that I had used. We talked about the importance of structure—what it meant to Tyler—and different things she could do to ensure it.

ERIC

- ▷ Create a lending library with multicultural videos, toys, books, magazines, and audiocassettes that families can borrow. Wordless books are effective, especially for parents who cannot read well. The pictures invite both child and caregiver to look at the pictures together, to talk about what is happening on each page, and to make up stories together. If parents do not drop their children off at the preschool, send home materials they can use to reinforce skills being taught in your classroom. One teacher discovered that sending home ordinary transparent tape was the biggest hit. With tape, families turned their homes into museums, showing off their children's work.

- ▷ Integrate parents into your activities. Invite them to share the stories, songs, games, food, and other traditions of their culture.

- ▷ When problems arise, invite families in or make a home visit to work together on problem solving and decisionmaking.

Supporting Vulnerable Families

You can be a powerful, supportive influence in encouraging parents to seek help for the sake of their children.

- ▷ Encourage parents or caretakers to let you know when a crisis occurs at home (e.g., death of a family member, witnessing family or community violence, shifts in foster care placements) so that you gain an understanding of the child's situation, provide the needed supports, and offer links to resources in the community. Ensure them that as far as the law allows, all information will be kept confidential. Let them know that you are an advocate for their child as well as the family.

- ▷ Link parents in peer support groups. Parents and other caregivers can nurture one another, as well as look to outside agencies for special services. In peer support groups, you or the preschool counselor can enhance the strengths that parents offer, give them the opportunity to lead as well as learn, and establish notions of reciprocity and trust that are healing for adults, in the ways that they are for children.
- ▷ Work with a social worker, mental health specialist, or family advocate to make referrals to available resources in the community such as treatment centers, self-help groups for individuals with alcohol and drugs problems (Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous), and organizations that provide support for family members of people struggling with addiction.
- ▷ Advocate for a case management approach, which brings all the service providers together to pool their understanding of the problems that a child is experiencing, and plan for effective, but not redundant, interventions. In some programs, the players can sit down together on a regular basis and review the cases. The chief benefit accrues to the family. But programs benefit too, as they play a major role in linking disparate services together, building contacts, and developing a common working style with a variety of agencies.

Follow-up Activities

The Video: Questions to Consider

Take a look at your class list. Think about the last time you had a discussion with each child's parents or caregivers. Focus on those parents or caregivers with whom you have the

least contact as you watch the video segment *Building Strong Links with Families.* Use the following questions to guide your viewing:

- How do the teachers in the video invite parent participation? What makes the parents in the video feel that there is always an open door to their child's classroom?
- In what ways could you incorporate the strategies shown in the video to build strong links with families?
- How do you recognize positive steps that parents are taking to become more involved in their child's education?
- How can you model ways for parents to relate to children and ways to carry out specific, developmentally appropriate activities at home?

The Teacher Connection

You may notice that the compassion and concern that you feel for vulnerable children does not always extend to parents who abuse alcohol and other drugs. Substance abuse is a charged issue; the mere mention of the topic may elicit a host of reactions in you. Professionals, however, need to come to terms with those feelings and reexamine them in the context of the best available knowledge about the patterns of addiction and recovery.

Meet with other teachers to discuss these issues. You may wish to invite a specialist (a consulting psychologist or social worker) to serve as a facilitator. Together, examine your own attitudes, values, and stereotypes about parents at risk and how they influence your interactions with families. Analyze what messages you send to families through body language and communicated expectations. Discuss ways to build an

understanding about vulnerable parents and empathy for them, and strategies for involving them in their children's education.

The Family Connection

If preschools are to be a safe haven for parents, there must be ongoing programs that focus on parents' needs. Talk with administrators about the importance of involving all families in their children's education. Ask them for their input and their assistance in:

- developing outreach activities for families (i.e., training parents to be mentors for incoming families and those at risk)
- creating lending libraries for families
- turning an underutilized area of the preschool into a parent resource room
- hosting parent workshops about childrearing topics
- sponsoring events and programs that reflect the day-to-day basic needs of families (e.g., health and job fairs, adult literacy programs, summer programs for children)

Conclusion

Teachers everywhere face real challenges in working with children at risk. Still, there is promising news for children, their families, and for teachers. Children at risk are not necessarily children with special needs; they are not some new kind of consumer for education.

Teachers with a background in early childhood education and an understanding of developmentally appropriate practice have many of the tools they will need to meet the challenges they face. Additional resources are available so teachers do not have to face these challenges alone. By developing partnerships with staff in your program and within the community, teachers, administrators, parents, and community service providers can collaboratively draw upon their power, expertise, and capabilities to help children at risk maximize their potential.

RESOURCES

Introduction

Brady, J.P., Posner, M., Lang, C., & Rosati, M. (1994). *Risk and reality: Implications of prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs.* Produced by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC). Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345, (301) 468-2600.

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.) (1987). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. $5. Provides guidelines to help teachers and policymakers create a curriculum suited to the needs and developmental levels of young children.

Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardo, C. (1992). *Children in danger: Coping with the consequences of community violence.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. $25. Examines the effects of community violence on children's development and what schools can do to provide these children with predictable, supportive environments to enhance their resilience.

Hawkins, J.D., Lishner, D.M., Catalano, R.F. (1985). "Childhood Predictors of Adolescent Substance Abuse." In *Etiology of Drug Abuse: Implications for Prevention* edited by C. Jones and R. Battjes. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Poulsen, M. K. (1992). *Schools meet the challenge: Educational needs of children at risk due to prenatal substance exposure.* Resources in Special Education, 650 Howe Avenue, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95825. $10 plus $1 shipping and handling.

Villarreal, S., McKinney, L., & Quackenbush, M. (1992). *Handle with care: Helping children prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol.* Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830. $17.95. Written by a multidisciplinary team of authors, this book provides teachers, counselors, and parents with insights into the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol and other drugs, and what programs can do to make a difference.

Vincent, L.J., Poulsen, M.K., Cole, C.K., Woodruff, G., & Griffith, D.R. (1991). *Born substance exposed, educationally vulnerable.* Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589, (703) 620-3660. Available for $8.90 + shipping (nonmembers); $6.25 + shipping (members).

Creating a Nurturing Classroom Environment

Hammond, M. & Collins, R. (1993). *One world, one earth: Educating children for social responsibility.* Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers. $14.95. Offers concrete suggestions for teachers to help build cooperative, trusting learning environments, enhance group spirit, raise difficult and sensitive issues, and develop community support for the children between the ages of 3 and 15.

McCracken, J.B. (Ed.) (1986). *Reducing stress in young children's lives.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-1426. $7. Describes the everyday problems that young children face and ways that teachers can help children develop the strength and skills to cope with them.

York, S. (1991). *Roots and wings: Affirming culture in early childhood programs.* St. Paul, MN: Toys 'n Things Press. $22.95. Provides strategies for creating a culturally responsive preschool program. Includes strategies for integrating cultural awareness into all aspects of a classroom and hands-on activities that shape respectful attitudes toward cultural differences.

Encouraging Cooperative Play

Jones, E. & Reynolds, G. (1992). *The play's the thing: Teachers' roles in children's play.* New York: Teachers College Press. $14.95. Describes the importance of play and provides suggestions for how teachers of children between the ages of 3 and 5 can support and promote play.

Monighan-Nourot, P., Scales, B., & Van Hoorn, J. with Almy, M. (1987). *Looking at children's play: A bridge between theory and practice.* New York: Teachers College Press. $13.95. Offers suggestions for teachers of children up to age 8 for observing, assessing, and supporting children's play.

Sawyers, J.K. & Rogers, C. S. (1988). *Helping young children develop through play: A practical guide for parents, caregivers, and teachers.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-1426. $5. Describes the importance of play and what adults can do support it.

Smilansky, S. & Shefatya, L. (1990). *Facilitating play: A medium for promoting cognitive, socio-emotional and academic development in young children.* Gaithersburg, MD: Psychosocial and Educational Publications. $29.95. Presents a theoretical analysis of sociodramatic play and offers suggestions for assessing and developing the play abilities of children between the ages of 3 and 8.

Van Hoorn, J., Nourot, P., Scales, B., & Alward, K. (1993). *Play at the center of the curriculum.* New York: Macmillan. $20. Examines the connections between play and development and provides strategies for building a curriculum that supports play.

Facilitating Transitions and Minimizing Distractions

Dodge, D.T., Koralek, D.G., & Pizzolongo, P. (1989). *Caring for preschool children. Volume 1.* Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc. $34.95. A comprehensive self-instructional training program for teachers of young children; includes a chapter on constructing learning environments with sections on establishing interest areas, selecting and organizing materials, and planning routines and the daily schedule.

Greenman, J. (1988). *Caring spaces, learning places: Children's environments that work.* Redmond, WA: Exchange Press. $29. Focuses on the importance of creating indoor and outdoor physical spaces that meet young children's need for comfort and security and provide them with a sense of order and autonomy.

Larson, N., Henthorne, M. & Plum, B. (1994). *Transition magician: Learning strategies for routine activity changes.* St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press. Provides early childhood teachers with props, games, and more than 200 activities to transform transitions into educational activities.

Los Angeles Unified School District. (1989). *Today's challenge: Teaching strategies for working with young children pre-natally exposed to drugs/alcohol.* Distributed free of charge by the Midwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300,

Oak Brook, IL 60521, (708) 571-4710. Offers guidelines for providing continuity and reliability through routines and rituals and ways to facilitate smooth transitions from one activity to another.

Nordquist, V.M. & Twardosz, S. (1990, Winter). Preventing behavior problems in early childhood special education classrooms through environmental organization. *Education and Treatment of Children*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 274-287. Describes the importance of designing classrooms that are responsive to children's needs and promote active involvement. Suggestions are provided to help teachers discriminate problems that require environmental reorganization from problems that are better addressed by focusing on individual children.

Sainato, D.M. (1990, Winter). Classroom transitions: Organizing environments to promote independent performance in preschool children with disabilities. *Education and Treatment of Children*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 288-297. Reviews strategies that facilitate independent performance of preschool children with disabilities such as environmental arrangements, prompts, and peer-mediated interventions.

Helping Children Manage Their Behavior

Branderberg, A. (1984). *Feelings*. New York: Mulberry. $3.95. Offers children a small catalog of feelings through pictures and text.

Dreyer, S.S. (1994). *The bookfinder: When kids need books*. Vol. 5. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service. $49.95. A guide to children's literature about the needs and problems of youth aged 2 and up. Includes books on a variety of issues such as dealing with anger, developing autonomy, peer relationships, and sharing.

Lipson, E.R. (1991). *The New York Times parent's guide to the best books for children*. New York: Times Books. $15. An annotated listing of children's books organized by title, author, illustrator, audience, and subject matter. An excellent planning tool for teachers.

Mitchell, A. & David, J. (1992). *Explorations with young children: A curriculum guide from the Bank Street College of Education*. Gryphon House, Inc., 3706 Otis Street, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712. $19.95. A comprehensive guide that covers a range of topics including discipline and classroom management. Provides strategies for keeping children physically safe while promoting their developing sense of self and their inner sense of control.

Muhlstein, E. (1993). *Facilitating social problem solving: A guide for preschool teachers*. Building Bridges Press, P.O. Box 1621, Cupertino, CA 95015-1621. $6.95 plus $1.25 shipping and handling. Outlines a five-step approach to conflict resolution through the social problem-solving process.

Prutzman, P., Stern, L., Burger, M.L., & Bodenhamer, G. (1988). *The friendly classroom for a small planet: Children's creative response to conflict resolution*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers. $14.95. Includes hundreds of exercises, activities, and methods designed to nurture self-esteem, build cooperation and community, develop effective communication, promote self-awareness, and empathy.

Segal, M. & Adcock, D. (1983). *Play together grow together: A cooperative curriculum for teachers of young children*. White Plains, NY: Mailman Family Press. $8.95. Focuses on conflict resolution for preschoolers and kindergartners.

Stone, J. (1991). *A guide to discipline.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-1426. $2.00. Provides suggestions for helping children to respect themselves and others.

Viorst, J. (1972). *Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.* New York: Aladdin. $3.95. A humorous picture book that describes the bad day of a young boy who gets more and more frustrated as the day goes on.

Wichert, S. (1989). *Keeping the peace: Practicing cooperation and conflict resolution with preschoolers.* Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers. $12.95. Provides detailed and useful information for teachers and parents on how to create environments that reduce potential conflicts, and how to guide children through problem solving when conflicts do arise.

Conducting Ongoing Classroom Assessment

Beaty, J.J. (1994). *Observing development of the young child. Third Edition.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. $25. Presents a system for observing and recording the emotional, social, motor, cognitive, language, and creative development of young children ages 2 to 6.

Dodge, D.T. & Colker, L.J. (1988, 1992). *The creative curriculum for early childhood. Third edition.* Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc. $39.95. A comprehensive guide for teaching young children; includes a child development and learning checklist.

Grace, C. & Shores, E. (1992). *The portfolio and its use: Developmentally appropriate assessment of young children.* Southern Association on Children Under Six, P.O. Box 5403, Little Rock, AR 72215-5403. $10. Examines how assessment portfolios can be used as an evaluation tool and as a way to communicate with parents. Includes a kindergarten checklist, a summary review of assessment instruments, and a listing of related resources.

Meisels, S.J. (1993). *Work sampling system.* Rebus Planning Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 1746, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1746. For a catalog and price list, call (800)435-3085. A performance assessment designed for preschool through grade 3 that includes developmental checklists, portfolios, and summary reports. All components make use of seven categories of performance and behavior: personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development.

National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (1991). *Guidelines for appropriate curriculum content and assessment in programs serving children ages 3 though 8.* Washington, DC: Young Children, 46 (3), 21-38. Ties guidelines for curriculum planning and assessment to how young children learn and develop.

The following organizations provide workshops and materials about ongoing classroom assessment:

Project Spectrum
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

Greater ACE Consortium
California Assessment Collaborative
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Southern Regional Education Board
592 10 Street, N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318-5790

National Black Child Development Institute
1463 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

Building Strong Links with Families

Building support and resources for the family: A family resource movement video. This 15-minute video intended for volunteer and staff training is available from Family Resource Coalition, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1520, Chicago, IL 60604, (312) 341-0900. $20 for members of the coalition; $25 for nonmembers. A catalog of books and pamphlets is also available free of charge.

Enright, M. & Williams, T. (1993). *Parent-staff partnerships: Keys to success.* Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), New England Resource Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160. $5. Describes what Head Start administrators and staff can do to strengthen parent involvement in their programs.

Henderson, A., Marburger, C., & Ooms, T. (1986). *Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents.* Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education. $10.95. Offers recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers for building home-school collaboration.

Kaplan, L. (1986) *Working with multiproblem families.* New York: Free Press. $16.95. A comprehensive resource book on how to work with and help vulnerable families. Includes chapters on characteristics of multiproblem families, assessing their needs, conducting in-home assessment, and intervention strategies to empower the family.

Stone, J.G. (1987). *Teacher-parent relationships.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-1426. $3.50. Provides practical guidance for preschool teachers on strengthening home-school links. Offers a number of strategies, including ways to establish connections at the beginning of the year, how parents and teachers can work together to ease the transition from home to school, and tips for parent-teacher conferences.

Straight from the heart: Stories of mothers recovering from addiction. (1992). Video available from Vida Health Communications, 6 Bigelow Street, Cambridge, MA 02139. Organizations may order a free preview. $275. Portrays a culturally diverse group of six mothers recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction. By listening to women's stories about their involvement with alcohol and other drugs and the hard facts about recovery, viewers will gain a greater insight into the dynamics of addiction and recovery.

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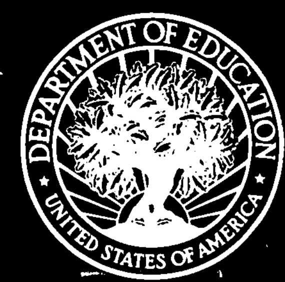

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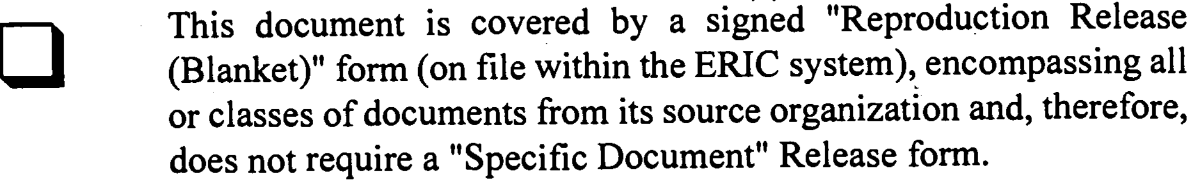

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