NINTH EDITION

Guiding Children's Social Development & Learning

THEORY AND SKILLS

Marjorie J. Kostelnik • Anne K. Soderman • Alice Phipps Whiren • Michelle L. Rupiper

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Marjorie J. Kostelnik, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Anne K. Soderman, Ph.D.
Michigan State University

Alice Phipps Whiren, Ph.D.
Michigan State University

Michelle L. Rupiper, Ph.D
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

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Marjorie J. Kostelnik
Anne K. Soderman
Alice Phipps Whiren
Michelle L. Rupiper

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Art and Cover Direction, Production Management, and Composition: MPS Limited
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Preface

NTMU
LOL
MIHAP

Today we live in a fast-paced, media-rich social environment. Besides our face-to-face encounters, we can connect with hundreds of "friends" and keep up with people all over the world through texting and other social media. Clearly, technology has revolutionized the way people relate to others. Even so, the fact remains that if we are to feel fulfilled, we need close human relationships. In addition, we must demonstrate a certain degree of social competence to achieve ultimate life success. As someone who aspires to work with young children professionally, this is where you can make a difference.

Every day, children in community programs and schools interact with peers and adults, learning valuable social and emotional lessons about themselves and the people around them. What you say and do with children has a tremendous impact on them and shapes them for good or ill in ways you will never fully know. While you are teaching them, children will also be teaching you things about child development, family life, social learning, and yourself. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning: Theory and Skills*, ninth edition, will help you make the most of all these learning opportunities.

Teachers and professional caregivers have a primary role in providing emotional support and guidance to the children with whom they work. This includes helping children develop positive feelings about themselves, increasing their ability to interact effectively with others, and teaching them socially acceptable behavior. Such learning is facilitated when children view you as a source of comfort and encouragement as well as behavioral guidance. How well you perform these roles is affected by how deeply you understand child development, your ability to establish positive relationships with children, and your grasp of principles of behavior management. This comprehensive blend of developmental and behavioral knowledge and practice makes a qualitative difference in how aspiring professionals like you think about children's social development and how you respond to it.

Too often, we have encountered students and practitioners whose interactions with children are wholly intuitive. They rely on "gut level" responses or approach child guidance as a series of tricks to meet short-range objectives, such as getting a child to stop interrupting. They have no purposeful or integrated set of strategies that address long-range goals, such as teaching a child to delay gratification. Other adults have more knowledge about broad principles regarding relationship building and behavior management but have difficulty integrating those principles into a systematic, consistent plan of action. Most distressing to us are adults whose lack of training leads them to conclude that the normal behaviors children exhibit as part of the socialization process somehow are abnormal or malicious. These people also often fail to recognize the impact of their own behavior on children. As a result, when children do not comply with their expectations, they think condemnation, rather than teaching, is appropriate for the situation. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning* has been written to address these shortcomings. We hope to eliminate much of the guesswork and frustration experienced by professionals in the field as well as to improve the conditions under which children are socialized in formal group settings. To accomplish this, we provide a solid foundation of current research on child and adult behavior. We translate that research for real-life use, connect it to skills that are proven to work, and assist students in applying knowledge and practicing skills to effectively support children's social development and learning.

New to This Edition

The ninth edition of *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning* has been extensively updated. Here are the major changes you will see within this volume:

- More than 250 new references have been incorporated into the text. Approximately two-thirds of all references now date from 2006 through 2016.
- New key terms have been added to the glossary.
- There is a significant amount of new content integrated throughout the text related to the following topics: technology and how it influences children's social development; children's brain development; children's executive functions; children and families from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds; children with disabilities; how play influences social competence; and dual-language learners.

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- We have created and converted multiple checklists into Professional Resource Downloads that provide relevant materials for use in class or in the field. Look for the Professional Resource Download indicators throughout.
- Each chapter ends with a downloadable Reflect on Your Practice feature. These provide sample checklists that students can use to monitor and reflect on their use of particular chapter-related skills in their interactions with children.
- Each chapter offers new discussion questions and new field assignments.
- All chapters have been reduced in length to make them more reader friendly.

Distinctive Features of this Text

Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning:

- Introduces the Social Support Pyramid in Chapter 1 to describe four phases in guiding children's social behavior. This pyramid appears in each chapter, highlighting how the skills presented in that chapter fit into an overall program of social support and intervention.
- Draws upon research and practice from multiple early childhood-related fields, linking theory and practice to highlight research and show readers how it can be translated into practical classroom applications.
- Identifies clear objectives for student learning. Each objective is numbered to correlate with a main heading within the chapter.
- Offers up-to-date, research-based rationales for skills and methods presented.
- Includes many real-life examples to illustrate key points.
- Offers step-by-step instructions for how to implement specific skills associated with the content presented in each chapter.
- Describes typical pitfalls associated with learning each skill and how to avoid them.
- Discusses the strong links between social competence and academic success.
- Presents information about children with special needs in all chapters, as well as examples and guidelines on how teachers can adapt the material to their work with children with special needs.
- Presents Challenging Behavior boxes, which are examples of how to work effectively with children whose behavior may be challenging to adults.
- Presents Highlight boxes, which are self-contained examples appearing throughout the text.
- Provides examples of children's art to represent authentic "young voices" in the text.
- Includes four case studies of children who demonstrate an array of social behaviors (available in Appendix B). Case study analyses at the end of each chapter help readers apply what they have learned to a child featured in one of these case-related scenarios.
- Provides discussion questions to prompt engagement with the material as well as self-reflection opportunities for students, including questions related to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Offers sample field assignments students may use to translate what they have read to interactions with children in early childhood settings.
- Provides a downloadable, criterion-referenced observation tool (in Appendix C) that instructors can use to evaluate students' skill use in field placement settings.

Presentation

Together, the chapters in this book comprise a comprehensive picture of children's social development and the classroom practices professionals use to enhance children's development and learning. We have included traditional areas of study such as nonverbal communication, self-esteem, emotions, play, aggression, decision making, rules, and consequences. We also have addressed current topics such as infant and toddler communication, self-regulation, executive function, resilience, friendship, prosocial behavior, bullying prevention, and positive behavior supports, including how to carry out intensive individualized interventions. Considered individually, each chapter offers an in-depth literature review backed by research findings from many fields (child development, psychology, physiology, education, special education, medicine, sociology, family studies, and interior design). The sequence of chapters also has been thoughtfully planned so that each serves as a foundation for the next—simple concepts and/or skills precede more complex ones; chapters that focus on relationship enhancement come before those that discuss behavior management. We have made liberal use of real-life examples to illustrate concepts and related skills. This is to assist students in making the connection between what they read and "flesh-and-blood" children.

Our scope of study encompasses the social development of children from birth to 12 years of age, with particular emphasis on children from birth to age 8. We have targeted this period of childhood because it is during the formative years that the foundation for all socialization takes place. Furthermore, the skills taught have been specially designed to take into account the cognitive structures and social abilities particular to children of this age. Because children live and develop within the context of a family, a community,

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a nation, and a world, they are constantly influenced by, and in turn affect, the people and events around them. Thus, our perspective is an ecological one in which children are viewed as dynamic, ever-changing beings in an equally dynamic, shifting milieu. Additionally, it has been our experience that students learn professional behavior best when they are given clear, succinct directions for how to carry out specific strategies. Defining procedures, offering examples, and giving a rationale for their use are necessary, but not sufficient. Thus, our approach to skill training is to point out to the student research-based strategies related to chapter content. We then break down those strategies into a series of discrete, observable skills that students can implement. We have been direct in articulating the specific steps involved. This forthrightness should not be taken to mean that there is no room for students to use the skills creatively. We anticipate that students will internalize and modify skills according to their own needs, personality, interaction style, and circumstance after they have learned them.

In addition, we recognize that an important component of using skills correctly is determining which alternatives from the entire available array are best suited to a given situation. Hence, knowing when to use a particular skill and when to refrain from using it is as important as knowing how to use it. For this reason, we discuss these issues throughout each chapter, both in the body of the text and in the pitfalls section at the end. We also have incorporated specific guidelines for how the skills can be adapted for use with children of varying ages and differing ability levels.

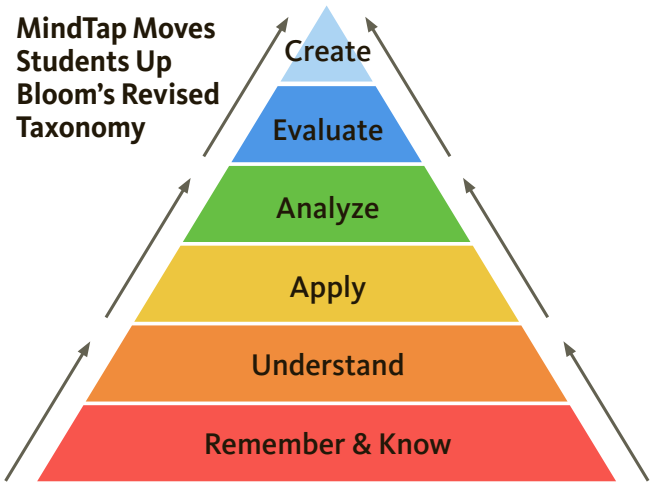
Supplements

MindTap™: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap for Kostelnik, Soderman, Whiren, and Rupiper, *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning*, represents a new approach to teaching and learning. A highly personalized, fully customizable learning platform with an integrated eportfolio, MindTap helps students to elevate thinking by guiding them to:

- Know, remember, and understand concepts critical to becoming a great teacher;
- Apply concepts, create curriculum and tools, and demonstrate performance and competency in key areas in the course, including national and state education standards;
- Prepare artifacts for the portfolio and eventual state licensure, to launch a successful teaching career; and
- Develop the habits to become a reflective practitioner.

As students move through each chapter's Learning Path, they engage in a scaffolded learning experience,



Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives.* New York: Longman.

designed to move them up Bloom's Taxonomy, from lower- to higher-order thinking skills. The Learning Path enables preservice students to develop these skills and gain confidence by:

- Engaging them with chapter topics and activating their prior knowledge by watching and answering questions about authentic videos of teachers teaching and children learning in real classrooms;
- Checking their comprehension and understanding through Did You Get It? assessments, with varied question types that are autograded for instant feedback;
- Applying concepts through mini-case scenarios—students analyze typical teaching and learning situations, and then create a reasoned response to the issue(s) presented in the scenario; and
- Reflecting about and justifying the choices they made within the teaching scenario problem.

MindTap helps instructors facilitate better outcomes by evaluating how future teachers plan and teach lessons in ways that make content clear and help diverse students learn, assessing the effectiveness of their teaching practice, and adjusting teaching as needed. MindTap enables instructors to facilitate better outcomes by:

- Making grades visible in real time through the Student Progress App so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Using the Outcome Library to embed national education standards and align them to student learning activities, and also allowing instructors to add their state's standards or any other desired outcome.
- Allowing instructors to generate reports on students' performance with the click of a mouse

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against any standards or outcomes that are in their MindTap course.

- Giving instructors the ability to assess students on state standards or other local outcomes by editing existing or creating their own MindTap activities, and then by aligning those activities to any state or other outcomes that the instructor has added to the MindTap Outcome Library.

MindTap for Kostelnik, Soderman, Whiren, and Rupiper, *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning*, helps instructors easily set their course since it integrates into the existing Learning Management System and saves instructors time by allowing them to fully customize any aspect of the learning path. Instructors can change the order of the student learning activities, hide activities they don't want for the course, and—most importantly—create custom assessments and add any standards, outcomes, or content they do want (e.g., YouTube videos, Google docs). Learn more at www.cengage.com/mindtap.

Online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank

An online Instructor's Manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including sample syllabi, discussion questions, teaching and learning activities for the college classroom, field experiences, learning objectives, and additional online resources. For assessment support, the updated test bank includes true/false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter. In addition, the Instructor's Manual includes an observation tool that instructors can use to monitor student skill use with actual children.

PowerPoint Lecture Slides

These vibrant Microsoft PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using figures directly from the textbook.

Cognero

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test-bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

Acknowledgments and Thanks

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Finally, over the years, we have worked with many students whose enthusiasm and excitement have invigorated us. Simultaneously, we have been privileged to know hundreds of children during their formative years. From them, we have gained insight and the motivation to pursue this project. We dedicate this book to them.

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To the Student

This book will give you a foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for guiding children's social development and learning in professional practice. We hope it contributes to your enthusiasm about the field and to your confidence in working with children and their families. Although what you read here is not everything you will ever need to know, it will give you a secure base from which to develop your own professional style. You will have the advantage of learning, in one course, information and strategies that otherwise might take many years to discover.

Finally, you are reading a book authored by people with extensive practical experience in working with children, engaging in research, and teaching this content to learners much like yourselves. As a result, we are aware of the issues related to children's social development that are important to students, and we have focused on those. We also have anticipated some of the questions you might ask and some of the challenges you might encounter in working with this material. Consequently, we have made a conscious effort to discuss these in relevant places throughout the book.

Hints for Using the Materials

1. Read each chapter carefully. Plan to read each one more than once. Use the first reading to gain a broad grasp of the subject matter; then, read a second time, paying particular attention to the sequence of development presented. Identify major concepts regarding adult behavior, and focus on the actual procedures related to each skill.
2. Highlight points you want to remember.
3. Go beyond simply memorizing terms. Concentrate on how you might recognize the concepts you are studying in real children's behavior and how you might apply this knowledge in your interactions with children.
4. Ask questions. Share with classmates and the instructor your experiences in using the material. Participate fully in class discussions and role-play exercises.
5. Try out what you are learning with children. If you are in a field placement, are volunteering, or are employed in a program, take full advantage of that opportunity. Do not hesitate to practice your skills simply because they are new to you and you are not sure how well you will perform them. Persist in spite of your awkwardness or mistakes, and make note of what you might do to improve. Focus on your successes and your increasing skill, not just on things that don't go perfectly. Good luck!

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1 Making a Difference in Children's Lives

OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

- **1-1** Define social competence, and explain how it affects children's lives.
- **1-2** Describe how child development influences social competence.
- **1-3** Explain the role of learning in achieving social competence.
- **1-4** Identify factors influencing the social environment.
- **1-5** Talk about your professional role in supporting children's social competence.
- **1-6** Discuss how developmentally appropriate practices support the development of social competence.
- **1-7** Describe a framework for guiding children's social development and learning.
- **1-8** Delineate the sections included in each chapter in this textbook.

NAEYC STANDARDS naeyc

1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. Building Family and Community Relationships
4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches
5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum
6. Becoming a Professional

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Think about the aspects of everyday living that are most important to you—family life, time with friends, school, work, and recreation. They all involve social interactions with others. From the moment we are born, we spend a lifetime actively engaged with others. Through social interactions, we gain companionship, stimulation, and a sense of belonging. We develop behavior that allows us to enjoy the company of others, form positive relationships, and come to understand social norms and values. We obtain knowledge of who we are and how the world works. Lessons learned during the early years about how to act and interact with others set the foundation for our success as adults. This is such a crucial facet of the human experience that much of children's attention during childhood centers on how to effectively navigate the social environment.

The social environment is complicated. Think about meeting someone for the first time. What do you do? How do you greet this person? You are probably thinking, "It depends," and you are correct. There is a lot to know and many things you must be able to do to function successfully in society. To interact effectively, you need to know a variety of scripts and what physical actions others will interpret as friendly. You have to make judgments about what is polite or impolite based on how well you know a person, his or her role, your role, the time, the place, and the culture in which you are operating. Based on all this, you will form an idea of how to best greet the person you have just met. You would adopt a very different manner to greet someone at a football game than you might use at a funeral. Although such variations make common sense to adults, children are new to the world, and many of the social understandings and behaviors we take for granted are things children are just learning.

Imagine you are working with children in a child-care setting or elementary classroom. You observe the following behaviors among three 6-year-olds in your group: Braedon, Rosalie, and Sarah Jo.

Braedon is an active child. He has strong reactions to the people and things around him. He is imaginative and has many ideas for how to play. In an effort to translate his ideas into action, Braedon spends a lot of time telling the other children what to do and what to say. When peers suggest alternate play themes or strategies, Braedon tends to resist their ideas and yell to make things go his way. When other children ask if they can play with something he is using, Braedon often answers, "No." If they persist, it is not unusual for him to push or hit to keep things for himself.

Rosalie is a quiet child who seldom misbehaves. Typically, she wanders from one activity to the next without talking to the other children. Rosalie responds when spoken to but rarely initiates social interactions with peers or adults. She cannot name anyone in the group who is her friend, and no other children identify her as a favorite playmate. Although children do not actively reject her, they have come to ignore her and seldom include her in their activities. Most days, Rosalie is a solitary figure in the room.

Sarah Jo is keenly interested in the other children and often invites them to interact with her. Frequently, she is willing to try games or play in ways proposed by peers, yet she also expresses ideas of her own. Sarah Jo shares easily and can usually figure out how to keep the play going. Although she has her ups and downs, she is generally cheerful. Other children seek her out as a playmate and notice when Sarah Jo is absent from the group.

As you can see, each of these children is exhibiting a variety of social behaviors. Unfortunately, Braedon and Rosalie are displaying interaction patterns that are not serving them well. In fact, if they maintain these patterns over time, their prospects for life success will be weakened (Goleman, 2011). On the other hand, Sarah Jo has skills that predict a positive future.

As an early childhood professional, you could help Braedon and Rosalie develop better ways of getting along with others. You could also support Sarah Jo in expanding her skills. In doing these things, you would be contributing to each child's social competence. To promote social competence, you must first know what it is and what behaviors characterize socially competent children.

1-1 Social Competence Defined

Social competence includes the knowledge and skills children need to achieve their goals and to effectively interact with others (Davidson, Welsh, & Bierman, 2006; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Consider the social, emotional, language, and cognitive skills the children are displaying in the following classroom interaction:

Claude and Alex are both building in the block area. When Alex takes a block from the shelf, Claude protests, "I need all the long blocks for my airport! Give it to me!" He yanks the block from Alex, who yells, "I need it for my bridge!" The boys each begin to tug on the block. After a few seconds, Claude suggests, "Hey, let's make your bridge go to the airport. All the people have to go on the bridge if they want to go to the airport!" Alex replies, "Yeah! That's a good idea! A big bridge for all the cars to drive on!" The boys begin to work together to create a road connecting the airport and bridge.

Think about the skills Alex and Claude demonstrated as they solved their problem in the block area. They used cognitive skills in recognizing a mutual problem, language skills in expressing their individual

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needs, and social skills when they developed a strategy for working together. By inhibiting an initial impulse to fight over the blocks, Alex and Claude exhibited emotional self-regulation and an awareness of how the other might feel. As you can see, a variety of knowledge and skills are evident in this simple interaction.

Many behaviors are associated with social competence. Typical categories include the following:

- Social values
- Personal identity
- Emotional intelligence
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-regulation
- Planning, organizing, and decision making
- Cultural competence

As you can tell by examining Figure 1-1, social competence integrates a broad range of values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills involving both self and others (Photo 1-1).

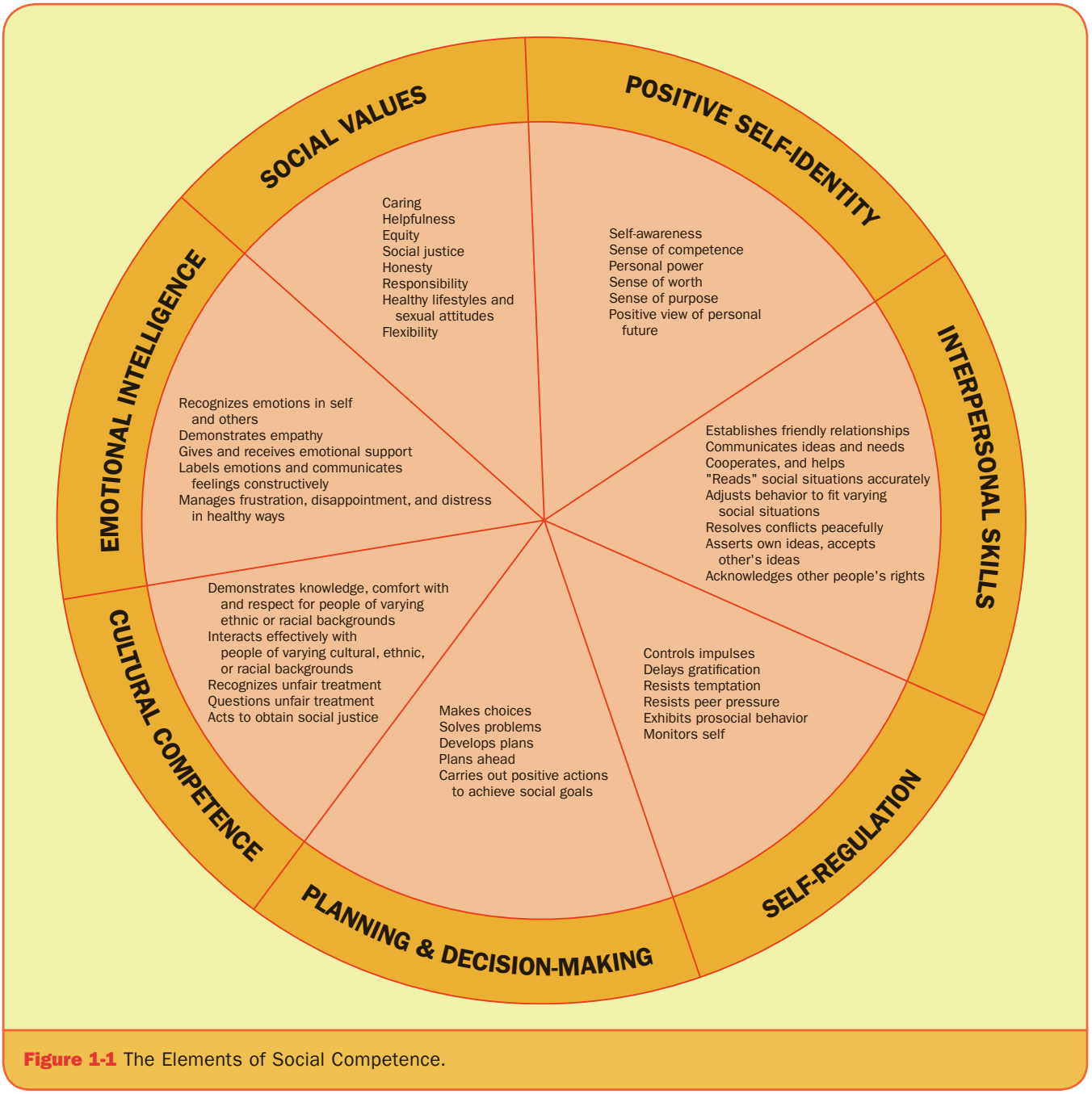

Figure 1-1 The Elements of Social Competence.

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Photo 1-1 Early childhood professionals should observe the behavior of the children they are working with to evaluate the social skills they are exhibiting. What social behaviors are these children exhibiting?

In the United States and in many societies throughout the world, people tend to view children as more socially competent when they are responsible rather than irresponsible; friendly, not hostile; cooperative instead of oppositional; purposeful rather than aimless; and self-controlled, not impulsive (Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, 2008; Hastings et al., 2006). Based on this perspective, Keisha, who notices that Gary is unhappy and attempts to comfort him, is more socially competent than Ralph, who walks by unaware of Gary's distress. Dinah, who often blurts out whatever comes to mind the instant it occurs to her, is less socially competent than if she were able to wait without interrupting. When Dante uses verbal reasoning to persuade his friends to give him a turn with the iPad game, he is demonstrating more social competence than a classmate who whines or relies on physical force to make his point. The profile of a socially competent child presented in Highlight 1-1 will give you a sense of how social competence translates into child attributes and behaviors (McClellan & Katz, 2001).

Note that the words *usually*, *frequently*, and *sometimes* best describe socially competent children's behavior. Children will not always be in a positive mood, nor will they always experience success in asserting their rights appropriately. Any child can periodically experience difficulty in navigating the social world. Usually these difficulties are short-lived and provide the opportunity to learn new, more effective social strategies. Children who take advantage of these opportunities (rather than becoming hostile or giving up) become increasingly successful in their social interactions and in effectively achieving their personal goals.

1-1a Individual Variations in Social Competence

Consider the following personal attributes:

- Kindness
- Honesty
- Shyness
- Generosity
- Friendliness
- Assertiveness

Which of these do you associate with social competence?

If you were to compare your answers with those of other readers, you would find many choices in common, but probably not all because definitions of social competence are fairly similar worldwide and incorporate most of the categories identified in Figure 1-1 (Chen & Rubin, 2011; Miller, 2016). However, culture plays an important role in children's social competence (Chen, 2009; Chen & Rubin, 2011). Some behaviors defined as socially competent in one culture are not defined that same way in others. Children raised in Western cultures are often socialized to be autonomous, self-directive, and assertive in their social relationships, whereas children raised in Asian cultures are often encouraged to be cooperative, self-controlled, and more restrained than their Western counterparts (Chen, 2009). To further complicate things, the same social value may be demonstrated through different behaviors in different groups. For instance, although many societies value respect, the combination of words and actions considered respectful in one family or culture may not match what is viewed as respectful in another (e.g., in some households, it is respectful to take your shoes off before entering the main living area; in other households, this is not expected).

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HIGHLIGHT 1-1

Observable Behaviors of Socially Competent Children

Individual Attributes

The child

1. is usually in a positive mood
2. is not excessively dependent on the teacher
3. usually comes to the program willingly
4. usually copes with rebuffs adequately
5. shows the capacity to empathize
6. has positive relationships with one or two peers; shows the capacity to really care about them and misses them if they are absent
7. displays a capacity for humor
8. does not seem to be acutely lonely

Social Skills

The child usually

1. approaches others positively
2. expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
3. asserts own rights and needs appropriately
4. is not easily intimidated by bullies
5. expresses frustration and anger effectively and without escalating disagreements or harming others
6. gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
7. enters ongoing discussions; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
8. takes turns fairly easily
9. shows interest in others; exchanges information with and requests information from others appropriately
10. negotiates and compromises with others appropriately
11. does not draw inappropriate attention to self or disrupt the play or work of others
12. accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own
13. interacts nonverbally with other children using smiles, waves, nods, and so on

Peer Relationships

The child is

1. usually accepted rather than neglected or rejected by other children
2. sometimes invited by other children to join them in play, friendship, and work
3. named by other children as someone they are friends with or like to play and work with

Source: Reprinted with permission from *Assessing Young Children's Social Competence*, by D. McClellan and L. Katz, 2001, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Champaign, IL (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED450953).

Such variations contribute to distinct definitions of social competence across and within cultures. Yet, regardless of which behaviors equate with social competence in a given group, all children eventually develop behavior patterns that can be described as more or less socially competent within the society in which they live. These behavior patterns will have a powerful influence on their lives.

1-1b The Benefits of Being Socially Competent

. . . the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ nor school grades, but rather the adequacy with which a child gets along with others.

Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with others . . . are seriously "at risk."

—Willard Hartup (early childhood researcher)

Social competence is not a luxury. It makes a tremendous difference in how children feel about themselves and in how others perceive them. Research tells us socially competent children are happier than their less competent peers. They are more successful in their interactions with others, more popular, and more satisfied with life. There is a strong relationship between early social skills and later academic, social, and overall quality of life (Barton, Steed, Strain, Dunlap, Powell,

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& Payne, 2014; Schonfeld et al., 2015). In addition, children with high social competence are less likely to exhibit challenging behavior (Dunlap & Fox, 2011). See Highlight Box 1-2.

As a result of these favorable outcomes, socially competent children tend to see themselves as worthwhile human beings who can make a difference in the world. Other people perceive them as desirable companions and competent members of society (Photo 1-2). The same cannot be said for children whose social competence is poor. Youngsters unable to function successfully in the social world often experience distress and loneliness, even in the early years. They frequently are rejected by peers, suffer low self-esteem, and do more poorly in school (Miles & Stipek, 2006). To make matters worse, socially incompetent children are at risk of continuing these problematic behavior patterns as they mature (Ladd, 2008).

You have an important role in helping children become more socially competent. How you structure the physical environment, promote friendships among children, and teach social skills will all influence children's social competence. Many other factors also impact whether children eventually become more or less socially competent. These factors include child development, childhood learning, and the contexts in which children function. You will need to know more about all of these things to support children in their journey toward social competence.

HIGHLIGHT 1-2

Learning Is a Social Process

Academic success in the early school years is based on social and emotional skills. Young children can't learn to read, do their sums, or solve a science problem if they have difficulty getting along with others and controlling their emotions, if they are impulsive, and if they have no idea about how to consider options, carry out a plan, or get help.

Students who demonstrate strong social and emotional skills also tend to exhibit the following:

- Greater academic motivation
- More positive attitudes toward school
- Fewer absences
- More classroom participation
- Higher math achievement
- Higher language arts achievement
- Higher social studies achievement
- Higher grades
- Fewer suspensions
- Less tendency to drop out in high school

Sources: Zins, J., Bloodworth, M., Weissberg, R., & Walberg, H. (2004). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. In J. Zins, R. Weissberg, M. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp. 1–22). New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University; Ladd, G. W. (2008). Social competence and peer relations: Significance for young children and their service providers. *Early Childhood Services*, 2(3), 129–148.

Photo 1-2 Socially competent children are more successful in their interactions with others.

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1-2 What Early Childhood Professionals Need to Know About Children's Development and Social Competence

Katie and Sandra, two 5-year-olds, are rocking their dolls in the housekeeping area.

Katie: We're friends, right?

Sandra: Yeah. You have a baby, and I have a baby boy.

Katie: These babies can't be friends. They don't talk or nothin'.

Sandra: Babies can't play games or save swings.

Katie: Not yet!

Sandra: Not like us!

Katie: Yeah!

Katie and Sandra are pleased to be friends and are proud of the social abilities they possess at 5 years of age, abilities that "their babies" have not yet developed. As children mature, developmental changes gradually occur that increase their social capacities. Such changes are governed by certain developmental principles that help us recognize commonalities among children and characteristics typical within age ranges (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The following five principles remind us that children's social development is complex, requiring the support of knowledgeable adults who appreciate the unique qualities of the children they serve.

1-2a All Development Is Interrelated

All threads of development (social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical) interweave and exist simultaneously. No aspect of development is more important than another, nor can any single thread exist independent of the rest. This principle is illustrated as children try to make friends. Their ability to establish relations with peers is dependent upon many developmental skills and understandings.

- **Social:** Negotiating the rules of a game; waiting to take a turn; deciding who will go first
- **Emotional:** Having confidence to approach another child; responding enthusiastically when invited to play by a peer; expressing empathy toward another child
- **Cognitive:** Remembering another child's name; developing strategies for solving conflicts that arise; knowing which scripts fit which social situations
- **Language:** Using words to greet another child or to describe how a game could be played; responding with appropriate comments to questions from a potential friend
- **Physical:** Making room for a new player; having the motor skills necessary to play a video game or a game of chase with a potential friend

Recognizing that all development is interrelated will enable you to better appreciate the many social behaviors children are trying to master. It will also help you identify opportunities to guide children's social development and learning throughout the day. Such chances come up as children play in the pretend grocery store, discuss rules for building with blocks, proceed through the steps in a science experiment, or work together to solve a math problem. Social development is happening all the time and everywhere children are found.

1-2b Social Development Occurs in an Orderly Sequence

Try putting these developmental milestones related to self-awareness in the order in which they tend to appear during childhood:

- Children define themselves by comparing themselves to others. (I ride bikes better than Sasha. I am shorter than Marc.)
- Children define themselves based on their personality traits. (I am honest. I am fun to be with.)
- Children define themselves based on what they look like. (I am a boy. I have brown eyes.)

What did you decide? In their proper order, social benchmarks such as these illustrate the principle of developmental sequence.

Social development proceeds in a relatively predictable fashion. Scientists worldwide have identified typical sequences of behavior or understanding related to various aspects of social development and social competence (Berk, 2013). For instance, children develop their concept of self over several years.

Preschoolers tend to focus primarily on physical traits. As they grow older, children gradually incorporate comparisons into their definition of self. By age 8 or 9, children become more conscious of the internal characteristics that comprise their personality. Although children spend differing amounts of time on each step and sometimes skip steps altogether, self-awareness seems to progress in roughly the same order for everyone.

There are developmental sequences for many aspects of social competence—self-regulation, empathy, prosocial behavior, moral understanding, ideas about friendship, and so forth. Knowledge of these sequences will help you determine reasonable expectations for individual children and decide what new understandings or behaviors might logically expand children's current levels of functioning. For example, knowing

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that 3- and 4-year-olds focus on the physical traits that characterize who they are, you might plan classroom activities such as self-portraits or body tracings to enhance children's self-awareness. However, you might ask early elementary-aged children, whose physical sense of self is more established, to tell or write stories focused on the personal qualities they value in themselves, such as honesty or being a good friend.

1-2c Rates of Development Vary Among Children

Darlene is 4 years old; so is Emma. Darlene could use whole phrases to describe her feelings by age 2. She has numerous strategies for getting what she wants, including taking turns and making plans for the order in which children will get to use a favored toy. Emma only began using multiword sentences around age 3. Her approaches to getting something she wants include asking a child who has it if she can have it next or getting the teacher to help her find another one like it. Darlene and Emma are alike in many ways, but they are different from one another as well. Both children are developing in a typical manner.

As illustrated by Darlene and Emma, all children develop according to their own timetable. No two children are exactly alike. Although the principle of orderly sequences still applies, the pace at which individuals go through the various sequences differs.

This explains why Darlene could express her feelings in words by age 2, whereas Emma accomplished the same skill several months later. Both children are exhibiting typical development, but the timing is different.

Based on the principle of varying rates, you can expect children of the same age to exhibit a wide range of social abilities. Some will be in the early developmental phases of a particular skill, and others will be farther along in the sequence. These variations are not a question of bad or good, worse or better, but simply typical differences in children's social development. Understanding this will help you to be more patient with children and more realistic in what you expect of them.

1-2d There Are Optimal Periods of Social Development

There are certain moments in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.

—Graham Greene (novelist)

Certain times in people's lives provide critical foundations for future development (Schiller, 2009; Sousa, 2012). During these periods, children are developmentally primed to acquire new understandings and skills. If children are denied the kinds of experiences that will enhance development during this time, it may be harder for them to acquire certain skills or abilities later on. This is the principle of optimal periods of development.

Between the ages of birth and 12 years, children are eager, motivated social learners. They want to connect—to become socially engaged. Concurrently, negative behavior patterns are not so entrenched that they cannot be changed. This makes childhood an ideal time for enhancing many essential attitudes and behaviors related to social competence. Some of these include the following:

- Trust
- Self-awareness and self-esteem
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Prosocial attitudes and behaviors
- Friendship dispositions and skills
- Problem-solving strategies
- Coping skills
- Executive function (decision making, organizing, planning ahead)
- Self-regulation

If the preceding developmental tasks are ignored, it is harder for children to become socially adept as adolescents or adults. The principle of optimal periods compels us to focus on children's social development beginning when they are babies and well into the second decade of life.

1-2e Social Development Has Cumulative and Delayed Effects

An experience that has a minimal effect on a child's development if it occurs once in a while may have a positive or harmful influence if it happens repeatedly over a long period of time (Weitzman, Edmonds, Davagnino, & Briggs-Gowan, 2014). This is the principle of cumulative effects. For instance, being the target of occasional criticism is not likely to cause permanent damage to children's self-esteem; however, youngsters who are subjected to steady fault finding are likely to develop lasting feelings of inferiority and pessimism (Seligman, 2007). On the other hand, reasoning with a child only once will not have a lasting impact on that child. However, adults who make a habit of reasoning with children will gradually see those children become better able to reason for themselves.

Some early experiences influence children's functioning in ways that only appear much later in life. For instance, children's development of self-regulation takes years to accomplish. Adults may even begin to wonder if their early efforts at reasoning with children will ever yield positive results. However, research shows that when adults consistently explain their point of

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view while also considering the child's perspective, children eventually become better able to monitor their behavior without constant supervision (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013). These strategies must be used for a long time before children can reason on their own.

Knowing the principle of cumulative and delayed effects will help you consider the long-range implications of your efforts to guide children's social development and behavior. As a result, there will be times when you reject a quick solution because it could undermine your long-term goals. For instance, even though it is faster to simply tell children "No" when they disobey, if you want children to develop self-regulation, you will take the time to talk to them about their actions. In doing so, both the cumulative and delayed effects of reasoning support children's eventual development of social competence.

As you can see, development plays a significant role in the extent to which children gain social competence. Understanding developmental principles will influence your interpretations of child behavior as well as your professional practices. Childhood learning is another factor to consider.

1-3 Learning and Social Competence MAEYC

Cooperation, generosity, loyalty, and honesty are not inborn. They must be passed on to the child by older people, whether they are parents, other adults, or older youngsters.

—Urie Bronfenbrenner (human ecologist)

Some of the social learning we pass on to children includes saying, "Excuse me" when they bump into someone, crossing streets at the corner, and deriving pleasure from sharing with another child. We communicate such lessons through our words and actions. How well children learn these lessons is governed by several principles of learning that impact social competence.

1-3a Children Are Active Social Learners

Consider the following Chinese proverb:

I hear, and I forget,
I see, and I remember,
I do, and I understand.

This saying captures a central truth about childhood learning: Children are doers. Children have active bodies and minds, which they use to make sense of social experiences in whatever they do. They accomplish this by observing, acting on objects, and interacting with others (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). As a result of their experiences, children form ideas about how the social world works. (For instance, Cory might think, "If I say 'Please,' Mohammed will give me the scissors right now.") Sometimes children's ideas are confirmed (Mohammed says, "Okay"). Sometimes children encounter evidence that is contrary to what they believe (Mohammed says "No" because he still needs the scissors). By observing, experimenting, and reflecting on what happens, children gradually make adjustments in their thinking (Cory decides, "I will have to wait for the scissors, but I'll get them next"). Through hundreds of experiences like these, children construct ideas about codes of behavior to follow and strategies to use (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).

Because children are active learners, they need many opportunities to experience the social world firsthand. For instance, children become more skillful at sharing when they practice sharing with others in their daily encounters, rather than simply hearing or talking about sharing. Figuring out how to divide the crackers at snack time, how two people can use the computer together, or how to fit an extra person into a game are tangible problems children can solve on their own or with support from you. Such natural opportunities for social learning become teachable moments, in which children are motivated to learn new strategies. A typical teachable moment occurs when Celia wants to jump rope with a group of children already jumping. You might use this chance to help Celia figure out words she might use to approach the other children. On-the-spot mini-lessons like these are powerful. Children have immediate opportunities to practice relevant new skills as well as get feedback on the strategies they use. As you guide children's social development and behavior, you will need to recognize these teachable moments and take advantage of the learning opportunities they offer.

1-3b Children Have Multiple Ways of Learning About the Social World

Although all children are active learners, they perceive, act on, and process social information in many ways. Consider the following examples:

Gary has a real feel for music and uses that medium as a way to express his feelings. When a problem comes up, he likes to figure it out on his own.

Samantha has a way with words. It's easy for her to communicate needs and feelings to others verbally. In problem situations, she prefers strategizing with a friend.

Gary and Samantha are demonstrating different combinations of knowing and learning.

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