Chapter 9
Preschool: Felipe’s Story
The pages of this Sample Chapter may have slight variations in final published form.
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Preschool

Felipe’s Story

students playing together
Chapter Focus

When you finish reading and reflecting on this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Outline different curricular activities planned for a preschool setting.
2. Describe the history of and need for Head Start programs.
3. Summarize several recommendations for or indicators of a quality preschool.
4. Describe strategies to support cultural and linguistic diversity with young children.

There is a multitude of types of preschool programs for children ages 3 and 4. A major reason for the wide range of programs is that approximately 50 percent of children attend a private preschool at a center, and another 18 percent are in nonparental home-based care (Barnett et al., 2003). These programs typically develop and follow their own curriculum. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), only 35 percent of U.S. public elementary schools offer prekindergarten classes. Preschool programs might exist in a public school, in a home, on a reservation, in rural or urban settings, in a church, or in a government building. Let’s join Felipe as he begins his morning of preschool at Washington County Head Start.

CASE STUDY: Washington County Head Start

It’s 8:15 in the morning and the mini-buses are arriving. About 8 children and several adults step out of each bus. With the morning rain, everyone hurries into the Community Action Building heading for different classrooms. The children, 3 and 4 years old, hang up their coats and go to the sinks to wash their hands in the common area. Susana, the teacher in Felipe’s classroom, greets her 20 students (all 4-year-olds) as they enter the room.

Breakfast: Nutrition and Socialization

The children find a place to sit at the tables, which are set with dishes and food. Each morning, they begin their day with breakfast. “Es tan bueno comer con amigos (It’s so nice to eat with friends),” the children say together before eating. Food is served family style, with children passing bowls of cereal, pouring milk, and helping themselves to bananas. Susana, Rita (the teaching assistant), and Rosa (a parent volunteer) sit with the children and join in the morning conversation. “Bananas taste good,” says Madalena. “Whoops,” announces Isabella as she spills her milk. She quickly picks up a cloth and cleans up her milk. The conversation and eating continues. You observe that many children are speaking Spanish, with some English words mixed in their sentences.

As the children finish breakfast, they carry their dishes to the dish-washing area, where a parent volunteer helps them. Estella shows you how to clean your dishes, “Put your glass over here and leave the banana peels in the garbage.”

Raul leaves his dishes on the table as he heads for the blocks. Susana walks over to Raul and quietly reminds him, “Remember, we clean up our own dishes. Then you play.” Raul heads back to the table and picks up his bowl, spoon, and cup. “Now I play,” he announces. Susana tells you, “We prefer gentle reminders to provide guidance. It is like ‘reading’ the environment, always keeping an eye on what is going on and being ready to step in to help the children choose an appropriate action.” You admit it didn’t seem punishing, merely helpful, when she provided direction to assist Raul.
Outdoor Play: An Environment for Physical Development

After the children clear their spots at the tables, they put on coats for outdoor play. There are two outdoor times each morning. Today, they have a choice of playing a game called Red Light, Green Light, playing with balls, or choosing other activities. Pepe and Ramon eagerly climb the climbing structure, which looks like a fort with ladders and slides. Part of the outside area is covered, so children play here without getting wet. Everywhere you look, you see children moving around, some individually and others playing together. You are reminded of the physical development of 4-year-olds and their need for activities that involve the use of large muscles. With the space and equipment outside, these children are developing coordination and balance through the games and activities, promoting the use of their large muscles by running, jumping, climbing, and throwing balls. Rita, Jessica, and Eduardo are drawing enormous pictures with sidewalk chalk. “Look at the giant man I made,” exclaims Jessica. Indeed, it is huge—at least eight feet tall. Rosa is with Felipe and Estella, playing some type of tag game, skipping along the edge of the play area.

Providing Guidance

Thinking about Susana’s comment about reading or scanning the environment, you watch Rita and Rosa who, although involved with activities with children, scan the entire play area continually. Just as Ramon starts to jump from the perch of the fort, Rosa walks over and asks him, “How are you supposed to get down from the fort, Ramon?” Ramon looks at her and moves off the perch and starts to climb down the ladder. So, this is why people say teachers have eyes in the back of their heads. These teachers seem to process what is going on around them and make good predictions about what might happen next. They also know when to step in to help the children problem solve. For example, after Rosa asked Ramon how to get down from the fort, she waited until he moved toward the ladder. She seemed to know that prompting with a brief question was enough to change Ramon’s activity.

After 15 minutes, Rita calls to the children, “Time to go inside. Think about what you might like to do today during choice time.”

Learning Centers

Today, children are busy with puzzles, books, blocks, the dramatic play and kitchen area, or working at a gardening table with plastic plants and real garden tools such as trowels and gardening gloves. There are many choices in the classroom. Eduardo shows you how to plant. “Put on your gloves first. See, this is the dirt. Put that in the pot and then put a flower in to grow. And here is the water.” Susana tells you that sometimes this is a sand table or a water table, but right now, it’s the gardening table. The activities planned for this week revolve around the theme of spring, and the gardening table fits right in with this theme.

You notice that besides the gardening area, there are several different centers set up around the room: a reading center, mail center, puzzle table, and a blocks and transportation center. A center (also called learning center, activity center, or interest center) is an area with materials that support active learning and typically include activities planned around children’s interests, individual and small group learning, and developmentally appropriate learning. Near the rug is the reading center, with large pillows, a couch, and a cart with books (some written in Spanish and some in English). On one of the tables are puzzles, where Isabella and José are working. “Look, I found the piece to fit here!” At another table, Rita has placed a typewriter, paper, envelopes, stamps, pencils, and crayons. Three children are talking about mailing letters: “We better get our letters ready before the mail leaves.” In the back of the room are two different areas. In one area are clothes for dramatic play and a small kitchen with real pots and pans, where Miguel, Esteban, and Floranna are “making a huge cake for everybody.” The other area has blocks, cars, trucks, and traffic signs. Felipe, Eduardo, Berenise, and Deanna are building a town. “Let’s make this the store and the school goes here. Put the stop sign near the school, OK?” It appears that learning centers offer lots of choices for the children. Looking around the room, you see how the learning centers are easily ac-
cessed by the preschoolers. You also note that each specific activity (painting, reading, blocks, etc.) is arranged in separate, yet easily accessible areas.

The floor plan of the preschool (see Figure 9.1) shows how the room is organized. With the counter height of all counters and storage areas constructed to be used by preschool-aged children, not only is it “child-friendly” but it also allows adults to easily view all areas and note if help is needed or any safety issues arise that need attention.

Carolyne, the program coordinator, comes to the door of the classroom. She asks, “Would you like to
talk about our program? We have about 20 minutes before their next activity.” Sounds great—you have observed just enough to have even more questions than when you first arrived this morning.

**Community Action Organization**

Walking down the hallway toward Carolyne’s office, you wonder, “Is this a new building?” “Yes, it’s several years old. We are housed within the Community Action Organization Building,” replies Carolyne. “We had a 10-year building drive to raise the funds for this building. This was truly a collaborative effort, with block grants, fund raising, and donations from local businesses and donors supporting the Community Action Building.” Other Community Action programs are housed in the adjacent wing of the building. The programs range from social services, emergency housing assistance, to skills training for adults. Head Start is viewed as a branch of these resources, as children and families receive education and social services to support family needs.

**Overview of Washington County Head Start Program**

Carolyne suggests that she start with a brief overview of their Head Start program. “We are a countywide program, with about 350 children and their families. Our overall purpose is to increase the social competence of children from low-income families by providing ‘developmentally appropriate education and care for children, involve and support their parents, and offer early childhood services that meet family needs’” (Washington County Community Action Organization, 1996). At each of the centers, the staff includes a center coordinator, one teacher/home visitor per class, and one or more assistant teachers. In addition, consulting staff includes mental health consultants, early childhood special education consultants, and family workers. “We work together toward our goal of increasing social competence of our children, and we meet frequently to accomplish this goal.”

**Head Start Services and Eligibility** In order to enroll in Head Start, families must meet certain criteria, as the program is established to provide services for children and families with low-income levels. Figure 9.2 describes the services provided by this particular Head Start program. Families who qualify (are below a certain income level) are able to participate in the program without any fees. In this center, Carolyne explains, “We reserve approximately 10 percent of our program enrollment for children with special needs. Unfortunately, only about one-third of children who qualify are able to attend Head Start. We do not have enough funding to provide services for the other two-thirds of eligible children.” Hopefully, this situation will change as more legislators support an increased budget for Head Start.

**Hispanic Population of Children in Washington County Head Start**

Many children in Washington County’s Head Start Program are of Hispanic descent. In fact, in Felipe’s classroom, all 20 children are Hispanic. The teachers acknowledge and celebrate the different cultures of the children and include many activities to promote cultural awareness and appreciation.

The largest number of culturally and linguistically diverse children enrolled in Head Start across the nation are Spanish speaking, with many other language groups represented in increasing numbers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). In 1999, the Head Start Bureau identified specific steps to include more children and families from the growing Hispanic population in Head Start programs. Currently, Hispanic children represent 33 percent of those enrolled in such programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

All teachers at this Washington County Head Start Center speak Spanish and English, which reflects the importance of communicating and learning in a child’s and family’s first language. When you visit Felipe’s classroom and later meet with Susana, Felipe’s teacher, she will share her thoughts about bilingual and bicultural education.

**Importance of Families**

Families are an integral component of Head Start. Family involvement includes volunteer work in classrooms or the school, serving as a representative on the Policy Council (each classroom elects one parent representative), or participating in parenting classes. There is a Family Services Staff at the center that...
provides social services through a coordinated model. This model identifies and supports the strengths, needs, and interests of each family through accessing social services (such as medical services or housing programs), providing educational training, or linking parents with employment programs.

**Home Visits** In addition to support through social services, Head Start teachers visit each family in their home a minimum of five times each year. These home visits are seen as "the most effective way to produce changes in the child’s long-term dispositions toward learning. The parent who understands the school program and who sees the child as a learner is better equipped to advocate for the child. Later, Susan will share the format and themes of the home visits with you.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences** Teachers also hold two parent/teacher conferences during the school year to focus on goals for each child and to provide support needed for the child to reach these goals. Teachers make phone calls home and send frequent notes to keep in contact with families. Carolyne finds, "All of these different communication formats are essential to involving families in Head Start." Another way families are involved is through adult education. A classroom for adult education is located in the Washington County Community Action Building. Families also are a key partner in the development and implementation of programs for children with special needs.

**Adult Education Program** Passing classrooms as you walk back down the hall toward Felipe’s classroom, Carolyne points out the five classrooms in this section of the building. Four of them house Head Start classes and one is for an adult education program. "Each morning, parents of Head Start children who are interested in pursuing a GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma), job training, or improving their English language spend time in this classroom. Tutors and volunteers assist parents in achieving educational goals." Carolyne continues, “Parents are welcome to ride the school bus, volunteer in the classroom, attend adult education classes, and share meals with their children.” Helping parents improve their education is a goal of Head Start. "It’s important to meet both the child’s and parent’s educational needs. Their learning is woven together. For example, many children are being introduced to the English language in their Head Start classrooms. At the same time, their mother and/or father might be learning English in the adult literacy program. They can share and practice their new language skills together at home.” This does seem to be a logical place for an adult education program, right next door to their child’s classroom.

**Journal 9.1** How might educational opportunities for parents at the Head Start center relate to their child’s learning?
A Conversation about Inclusion

Talking with Carolyne about inclusion reveals how the staff in this Head Start program develops and implements programs that reflect inclusive practices. Carolyne states, “We interpret inclusion as placing a child with special needs in a classroom with her or his typical developing peers, working toward the goal of enabling the child to experience the same opportunities as all children.”

In discussing the program at Community Action Head Start, Carolyne explains, “Services are responsive to each child’s individual needs. Communication is maintained with each family, particularly during the process of assessment and in the writing of the learning goals for each child. Continuous communication is also maintained with early intervention support staff, resulting in a collaborative working team. Our staff is trained to recognize when to intervene and help a child or when to allow a child to complete a task independently. Curriculum and routines are adapted for each child, with programs planned on an individual level. The classroom environment is set up with each child’s learning needs taken into consideration.”

With this brief introduction to Washington County’s Head Start Program, you head back to the classroom, eager to observe Felipe, his classmates, and Susana. Curious about the curriculum and the bilingual nature of this preschool, you enter the room just as the children begin circle time.

FELIPE’S MORNING

Circle Time: Building a Community of Learners

Circle time follows breakfast, outdoor play, and choice time. Susana turns to José and says, “It’s your turn to ring the bell.” José rushes over to the counter, picks up the bell, and rings it, saying, “Time to go to circle!” The children clean up the areas where they have been playing, with parent volunteers and teacher assistants helping them. Susana is seated on the large rug near the front of the classroom. Children begin to join her there. Rita, the teacher assistant, is helping Manuel put puzzles away. Each time Rita looks away, Manuel dumps the puzzle out again. Rita notices what Manuel is doing and provides guidance by saying, “This time we will put the pieces in, leave them in, and then go to the rug.” Together, they finish the puzzle and walk over to the circle.

When the children are settled at the circle, Susana puts a CD in the CD player. The music starts and Susana begins singing, “We all go around walking together.” The children stand up and start walking around the circle, joining in the song. The first verse is in English, the second verse in Spanish. Julio and Isao throw hands with Rita, as they walk along. Julio has some difficulty with his balance, so Rita is nearby to provide support as needed. “Not too much,” she says, “Only enough to make it safe for him.” Julio has motor challenges, sometimes bumping into objects or falling down. Susana referred him for further testing and diagnosis, as she wanted him to receive support services to help him in his development. She shares, “I’m glad he’s in our class. I want him to have the support he needs to help him with his physical coordination and development.”

As the song ends, the children stop walking. Several children bump into each other, which causes some giggles. Susana requests, “Sit down, please, and let’s think about our job chart.” You’ve noticed that she starts many of the activities with a brief overview about the activity. This must help the children focus on what is going to happen next and know what Susana expects of them. Felipe points to the job chart, “Today, I want to check for the bus.” Susana holds up cards with names and asks Rosina to pick five cards. “These are today’s workers: Marcos, Gerardo, Francisco, Julio, and Jenesis.” The five children come up to the pocket chart and each places his or her name card into a pocket with a picture of a job on the outside. Two children will wash tables after lunch, one child will inform Susana when the bus arrives, and Julio and Jenesis will choose a book for story time. Felipe laments, “I wanted a job, teacher.” Susana reminds him, “You had a job yesterday and we have to take turns. But you can ring the bell for outside play today.” That brings a smile to Felipe’s face.

Susana finds circle time to be a format for her to convey the daily jobs and to communicate her respect...
for the children’s needs to play, pretend, and choose activities (Stone, 2001). By noting that Felipe wanted a job and finding one for him, she was communicating her acknowledgment of his desire to have an assigned duty. Susana also finds circle time as a way to model respect as she listens to the children and their thoughts each day. She models with words and respectful behavior. These are important ingredients in creating community.

**Project Time: Integrating Music, Science, and Art**

“Now, let’s think about our ‘Getting Ready for Spring’ project,” suggests Susana. “Remember, we have been dressing the dolls the past few days. What did we want them to wear to be ready for spring weather?” Teresa smiles, “I put boots on the little boy and made an umbrella for him.” Rita holds up the doll wearing a raincoat, boots, and holding an umbrella made from fabric and a pipe cleaner. “Look at him. He’s ready for the weather now,” shares Rita. Felipe says, “Just like today—rain, rain, rain.” Susana holds up a handful of pipe cleaners and a basket of fabric. “Today, when you go to one of the centers, you may choose to make a rainy-day picture with umbrellas, or paint a picture about any ideas you have about rainy spring days, or make rainy-day things.”

Rita has already prepared paint and placed brushes at two of the tables. The third table has scissors, glue, fabric pieces, pipe cleaners, and construction paper on it. “You may choose to paint first and then add decorations, or make decorations and then paint the picture,” says Rita. The children go to the tables, picking up paint smocks placed over the back of chairs. Rita and Susana help the children get started. Rita also turns on the CD player, so they can sing along with rainy-day songs.

During these different activities, children make choices about their projects. Some children use paints, others use construction paper or fabric. Isuaro finds the glue stick and is gluing clouds all over his paper. At another table, Marcos and Berenise are making lots of colorful boots. At the painting easels, Jessica is painting large circles. She says, “These are suns trying to come out today.”

At the construction table, Rosa, the parent volunteer, is helping children cut out fabric for umbrellas. Felipe wants to “make lots and lots of raindrops.” He likes to add extra details to his pictures, and he’s excited about the idea of shiny raindrops. Felipe finds some aluminum foil for his raindrops. “Wow, everyone will see my rain now!” Next to him, Madalena is cutting out little boots. She wants to make “a whole page of boots so kids can keep their feet dry.” Sounds like a good idea, as you notice rain is still falling outside.

Trying to scan the entire classroom, you see an adult with each of the three groups of children at the different activity tables or centers. The children have choices about their projects, with adult supervision and assistance nearby. The activities or choices are designed to be developmentally appropriate for 4-year-olds, including large pieces of paper for paintings, glue sticks instead of large bottles of glue (it’s difficult for 4-year-olds to control the amount of glue on their project), fabric already cut in small pieces, and paints in stable containers to reduce spills.

While the children work on activities, adults are engaged in conversation with the children about their creative work without directing their work. You hear Lucero exclaim, “Oh, look at the raindrops. They keep moving down your page.” Ruben explains, “Sí, I want a rainy, rainy picture.” They both seem pleased with Ruben’s work.

Susana explains, “I integrated art, music, and science into our Spring Project theme. I think it helps the children understand the season better when they connect with lots of different subjects and real occurrences in their life. So talking about weather in relation to what to wear in this season is important for them to learn.”

The children work on their projects for about 40 minutes. At this point, Rita and Susana remind the
children, “Clean your hands first, then take off your paint smocks. We will let your paintings dry while you are outdoors playing.” After washing their hands, the children head for the coat racks, pull on their coats, and go out to play.

**Measurement: Active Mathematics**

During this second outdoor play, Susana brings out three pairs of boots and a tub of water. Several children pull on a boot, put their foot in the colored water, and make a footprint on the playground. “Look,” exclaims Susana, “Your foot is really big.” Estella and Roberto begin measuring their boot prints and try to decide who has the biggest boot. Susana provides time for students to explore the concepts of measurement as she encourages inquiry and use of the language in mathematics. She follows the recommendations from the NAEYC/NCTM Joint Position Statement on Early Childhood Mathematics (2002), considered by many early childhood educators to provide early learning standards in mathematics. After a few more minutes spent measuring boot prints, Felipe asks, “Teacher, is it time for me to ring the bell yet?” “Sure,” says Rita. Felipe reaches for the bell and reminds everyone, “Time to wash your hands for lunch.”

**Lunchtime: Nurturing Language**

Again, the children start their meal by saying, “Es tan bueno comer con amigos.” Conversations are about rainy-day pictures, boot prints, and plans for their afternoon. Ruben remembers, “Today, we are going to my friend’s house and see his new kittens.” That starts a string of stories about cats and kittens. You hear Susana asking Teresa, “What is your favorite fruit?” Several conversations are about the food the children are eating. You think of the Head Start Parent Handbook you saw in Carolyne’s office and recall that nutrition was a program goal. This might be why the children and adults are discussing food and food groups. Rita is sitting near Felipe and Marcos as they discuss pizza. Felipe says, “Next to ice cream, pizza is my favorite.” Rita asks him, “What is on top of pizza?” He says, “Ketchup and cheese.” “This red sauce is made out of tomatoes, just like ketchup,” notes Rita. “Well, I like tomatoes,” agrees Felipe.

Soon, the meal is ending. Children follow the same routine, bringing dishes to the cleaning cart, scraping food, and sorting dishes, glasses, and silverware into appropriate soaking containers. They then head for a story on the rug before going home. Rosa, the parent volunteer, reads the story in Spanish, chosen by Julio. Just as she finishes, Marcos looks out the door and announces, “I see buses!” Susana walks toward the door with the children. They begin singing, “Adios amigos, es hora a partir (Good-bye my friends, it’s time to go).” Susana, Rita, and Rosa help with coats and walk with them to the door. “See you mañana, and remember to tell your family about your rainy-day painting and boot prints.”

Susana turns to you and says, “I need to make a quick phone call to Jessica’s mother. Let’s meet in the classroom for a visit about our program.” You help Rita hang up the rainy-day paintings. The paintings are all different and quite colorful.

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**A Visit with Susana**

**Susana’s Philosophy: Working with Families to Support Learning**

You ask Susana to tell you how she came to work at Head Start. She responds, “My college work was in psychology and I began working in a child care center following graduation. After a year at that center, I heard about an opening here in the preschool. I started five years ago as an assistant teacher and two years ago was promoted to lead teacher.”

Knowing that a teacher with five years of experience has a rationale or a philosophy for what happens in her classroom, you ask Susana about her philosophy of teaching. She tells you, “In my classroom, my major goal is to help children become the best that they can. By this, I want children to learn social skills and learn how to solve problems in getting along with each other as well as academic skills to help them in their development. I also spend part of each school day working with families. I teach from 8:30 to 12:00 and then spend from 12:30 to 4:00 meeting with parents, talking on the phone with families, or planning for or going on a home visit, along with my curriculum planning.”
So my philosophy of teaching also includes working with families to help them support their child’s learning.”

When you observed the children in Felipe’s classroom, you saw that many activities were designed to allow for student-centered learning. You ask Susana why she plans for choice and free-play time for the children. She explains, “We have a 45-minute block planned each day for free-play or choice time. Although there may be a theme connected with a project we are working on, we want children to choose their activities and friends to play with. Children learn so much from play. At 4 years of age, they are ready to spend time negotiating activities and making choices. Did you notice the children working with the typewriter?” she asks. “Some of them are typing their names with the typewriter. They are learning to use a keyboard and to put letters together. The children are successful, whether they type their name or make up pretend words. They can finish the activity with a stamped letter, perhaps draw a picture on it, and we send it to their home or a friend’s home. All of this is developmentally appropriate for this age child. It also fits with my philosophy of teaching—structuring or planning activities that have an expected outcome or objective, such as learning about letters and about the mail system, yet is open ended enough to allow children from differing ability levels to be successful learners. The children have freedom to choose which activities they want to be involved in during this free-play period.”

**STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING: PLANNING FOR THE WHOLE CHILD.**

Another aspect of Susana’s philosophy is revealed when reviewing her written plans. When you look at her planning book, you see that she has a system to check if each of the developmental areas (cognitive, social, emotional, and physical) are incorporated in activities throughout the day. Remember the children working in the gardening table? They were talking about what plants need to grow (cognitive development), planning their garden together (social development), expressing satisfaction and delight with their planting skills (emotional development), and using small muscles and eye-hand coordination skills (physical development) to place the dirt in the pot with garden scoops. This was a developmentally appropriate activity for 4-year-old children, as it incorporated activities at their level as well as extended the skills and knowledge they were learning in class.
As Susana translates her philosophy of education into practice, she considers the children’s learning needs and goals. In order to develop these goals, a screening assessment is conducted in the early part of the school year that helps her develop appropriate learning goals.

**Screening: Assessment for Curricular Decisions**

During the fall, each new student entering Head Start is administered the Early Screening Inventory (ESI). The ESI is an individual developmental screening assessment designed for use with children from 3 to 6 years of age. The ESI takes 15 to 20 minutes to administer and is composed of 25 items that are scored from 0 to 3 points, according to the child’s response. The purpose of the ESI is to provide staff and family with information about the child’s functioning in three major developmental areas:

1. **Visual-Motor.** Includes a Draw-a-Person task and items that examine fine-motor control, eye-hand coordination, and ability to remember visual sequences and to reproduce two and three dimensional visual tasks
2. **Language and cognition.** Includes items that examine language comprehension and verbal expression, and ability to reason, count, and remember auditory sequences
3. **Gross motor/Body awareness.** Includes items that evaluate a child’s large muscle coordination, balance, ability to hop, skip, and imitate body positions from verbal cues. (C. Westlake, personal communication, July 3, 1997)

The ESI is administered in the child’s primary language. As in most developmental screening assessments, different developmental areas are broken into observable tasks, which the child performs during the individual assessment session. Tasks are sequenced on a developmental continuum and linked to an age at which a child should typically be able to perform the task. The results of the assessment show significant developmental delays or areas where children are more advanced.

Children are not “screened out” of the program; rather, the purpose of the screening is to develop individual educational plans for the child, based on her current level of development. When Julio was screened, it was found that he had developmental motor delays. The result of the screening led to a referral for further testing and diagnosis, in the process of securing special education services to support and assist Julio in his development. Approximately 10 percent of the enrollment in Head Start programs is designated for children with special needs. These children are included in their classroom with their peers, with special education services coming to the program.

Susana explains, “Since screening is administered early in the school year, I can discuss the strengths and needs of each child with his or her parents. We then work together to develop each child’s educational plan to reflect goals drawn from this assessment.”

You ask Susana about the controversy regarding the use of screening inventories. You’ve heard that some educators feel that screening children leads to categorizing them and looking at their weaknesses more than at each child as a whole. Susana tells you, “We think of the screening inventory as one piece of information about a child. The screening helps us see if there are areas we should focus on to help the child learn. And if the child knows more than was shown on the inventory, we move to other areas in his or her education plan.” Her comments help you see that in this preschool program, the screening inventory is used for information purposes and not as the sole representation of what a child knows or can do.
Now that you have learned more about the educational philosophy that Susana works from, let's look at the curriculum in her classroom, which is grounded in her philosophy of teaching.

**Curriculum Planning for Preschool Children**

When asked about curriculum, Susana shares, “My curriculum comes mainly from the learning needs of my students and my knowledge of developmentally appropriate learning activities for 4-year-olds. Also, many of the major ideas for projects and themes come from ideas shared by the teachers in our center. We plan together in the beginning of the year and then make many changes according to the children’s learning needs and interests that emerge during the year. We also look at individual education plans for each child and make sure this is incorporated in our day-to-day curriculum. And, of course, since all of my children are Hispanic and speak Spanish, we work with a bilingual and bicultural curriculum.” These areas of curriculum will be explored in this section.

**Teachers’ Shared Planning Time.** At this center, teachers have a shared planning time on Mondays. They plan several large projects for the month and make more specific plans for the week. Susana finds she gets great ideas from other teachers. “It seems we each have special interests or talents and share these with each other. One of the teachers is an artist and we really appreciate her ideas about painting and drawing.”

An example of shared planning is evident in the current project theme of spring. One teacher owns a nursery and brings in seeds and soil for other teachers to use in their classrooms. She also donated gardening tools. The children will take a field trip to the nursery. Working together has brought expertise and additional resources into the classrooms and benefited both teachers and children. Susana reflects, “When I first started here, I had no experience in curriculum planning. I relish the ideas and the sharing among the teachers here and have learned a lot about curriculum and teaching from working together.”

**Education Plan.** Each child in Susana’s class has an individualized education plan developed between the family and the teacher. During an early fall visit, the teacher makes a home visit to each child’s family with the goal to develop the education plan for the school year (see Figure 9.3). Parents discuss what they would like their child to learn that year. Susana listens to their thoughts and goals for the child and discusses different strategies for accomplishing these goals. She explains, “For each goal, we develop a home strategy and a school strategy so we work together toward the same goal.” At the end of the home visit, Susana leaves a copy of the goals and strategies developed in the family visit. Each child has two to five goals for the year, which then translate into classroom curriculum.

For example, Manuel’s parents expressed concern about his language development. “Manuel mostly uses two- or three-word phrases when he talks with us,” they explain. “It seems like his brother was using more words when he was age 4.” Susana assures them that Manuel’s language is within the normal range of development for his age, but she agrees that focusing on this would be a good idea, especially through spontaneous play and conversational activities. Manuel’s family and Susana developed a goal that would encourage Manuel to use four- and five-word phrases and respond back to him with full sentences. Each day, Susana plans time for Manuel to spend in an activity that encourages conversation, such as sharing about the calendar or events at home. She records his progress each week and shares this with Manuel’s family (see Figure 9.4 on page 295). His mother is also encouraging longer phrases and sentences in her interactions with Manuel. By learning what each family considers important for their child’s learning, Susana finds, “I am able to plan curriculum that incorporates these individual education plans in our time at school.”
CHAPTER 9

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANS AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

Individual educational plans assist students with special needs to receive appropriate education and services. In Susana’s classroom, three children were identified as having special needs as a result of the developmental screening in September. Julio is now participating in physical therapy to improve his motor skill development. The physical therapist comes to the classroom and works with Julio one morning each week and then meets once a month with Susana to discuss Julio’s progress and ways to integrate physical therapy in his classroom activities. The speech and language therapist meets with two children in the classroom on a weekly basis. Her recommendations for the children are included in their individual education plans, so the families and Susana work together to meet the child’s needs. The early childhood special education specialist is a consultant who works with the specialists and with teachers and families to develop and monitor individual family

The Education Plan

The Teacher and Parent will develop an Individualized Education Plan for each child in the program. The Plan will describe educational goals for the child based on family goals as well as the results of comprehensive screening and assessment. It will form the basis for individualized educational activities throughout the year. The child’s progress will be tracked and goals adjusted as circumstances change or goals are achieved.

For children starting in September or October, the Plan must be complete and in the child’s file before the Winter break. For children starting after October, the Plan must be complete within 6 weeks of the child’s first attendance. If this is the child’s second year in the program, a new Education Plan should be written based on this year’s Assessments.

One week prior to Ed Plan home visit send home Parent IEP Questionnaire to be filled out by parent. Be sure to have extra copies at the conference for parents who forgot. Just looking at the questions ahead of time helps get the parents thinking, even if they don’t write anything down.

Children who were three on September 1st should have the Education Plan for Three Year Olds; children who were four on September 1st should have the Education Plan for Fours.

Assessment Tools to Take to the Education Plan Conference

Refer to Screenings and Assessments to identify the child’s Strengths and Goals (Needs).

- Early Screening Inventory
- Health and Developmental Assessment
- Classroom and home visit observations
- Home Visit Plan and Record
- Oregon Assessment

Parent Involvement

As you review the IEP Questionnaire, invite parents to discuss what they hope their child will learn at Head Start. Be aware that parents have probably been conveying their goals all along, but in different words. (Example: “He has nobody to play with” is a way of saying, “I hope my child will make friends at Head Start.”) The teacher can reflect the goals s/he believes the parent has been communicating rather than asking the intimidating question, “What are your goals?”

Writing and Goals

“What do we want the child to learn by the end of this school year?” Your goals for the child will relate mostly to the child’s functioning in an educational environment. The family goals will be broader, looking at the child’s functioning at home, in the neighborhood, and at school. Both are valuable.

Source: Community Action Organization Head Start. Reprinted by permission.
service plans (IFSP). These plans are developed to assist the child in improving in specific areas that were identified as needing special attention. In most cases, the goals in the IFSP are also included in the child’s individual education plan.

**ASSESSMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN.** Susana and many other preschool teachers find the guidelines in the NAEYC publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) to be a good resource to use in designing assessment of the children in her program. “When the family and I plan the educational goals for the year, we need some marker for where the child is now and a way to note the child’s progress during the year. With children who are 4 years old, I wouldn’t give tests all year to check their progress. I want to assess them in a way that is appropriate to their age and experiences here in the program and at home.”

The assessment that Susana finds the most useful is ongoing, purposeful, and helpful to her in adapting curriculum and teaching to meet the developmental and learning needs of the children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Susana finds that observations and interviews are the two most useful types of assessment with 4-year-olds. But before an observation, she plans the intent of her observation and develops a form to record key points. For example, a recent focus was on children’s social interactions during choice time or outdoor play. Using a chart listing the names of her students, Susana recorded the type of activity a child was involved in and the role of the child in the social interaction. Sample questions she used for the focus included: Is the child a leader or a follower or does the child change from one to the other? Did the child share materials or equipment? Did the child resolve conflict if it arose? Did the child alternate between group play, partner play, and individual play? By keeping these questions in mind, she narrowed her focus during the observation, which made this a valuable observation rather than just “watching.” Susana also stressed the importance of recording the information. “By the time the day ends, I easily forget exactly what I observed. And I find that the sheet with the class names helps me remember to observe each child.”

Findings from the observations are helpful in looking at learning patterns of a child and noting growth or changes over a period of time. The observations are made in relation to the individual education plans developed by the family and Susana, and provide helpful information about the progress the child is making on the individual goals.

**BILINGUAL CURRICULUM.** Throughout the morning, Susana most often speaks in Spanish for instructional purposes and other times in English during conversations with the children. Most of her students’ first language is Spanish. Susana’s intent in using Spanish for instruction is to ensure that the children’s learning is comprehensible, which requires use of the child’s primary language. Bilingual education is interpreted differently by many educators. We will refer to bilingual education as the presentation of curriculum in two languages—the home or primary language of the child for acquisition of new knowledge and English for learning the dominant language. In this model of bilingual education, the teacher consciously organizes instruction so that the primary language is used for learning. The purpose of using the second language, English, is to promote second-language
development for **English language learners** (ELL). Susana has had her own experiences with learning a new language and culture as a child. She tells us, “I came to America from Peru when I was 14 years old. I did not know English and wanted to make new friends. I was so lonely. It is very important to me to find a way to honor the language the child speaks and also to help that child learn English so he or she can be successful in school. And for the children who primarily speak English, I think it’s important for them to learn Spanish. Most of them have relatives who speak Spanish only. If these children learn Spanish, they can communicate with their grandparents and learn more about their heritage and culture. One language or culture should not be discarded for another. Both should be honored.”

**JOURNAL 9.3** Susana shared some of her struggles with learning English and living in a new culture. How might these experiences affect her belief about bilingualism and biculturalism in her classroom?

**CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY.** Susana’s comments about bilingualism and biculturalism are similar to those made by the NAEYC in its position statement on linguistic and cultural diversity and by other prominent educators (Garcia, 2002; Nieto, 2004). Garcia (2002) encourages early childhood educators to view cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset and a resource that children and their families bring to the school. Nieto (2004) reminds us that language and culture are interwoven, and that loss of the child’s primary language often results in a negative impact on a child’s knowledge of his own culture. Susana acknowledges and celebrates the cultural diversity of her students, while providing the educational experiences necessary to help prepare them for their future schooling.

One of Susana’s professional development goals is to learn more about language development for children coming from a monolingual home. She wants to help Spanish-speaking parents understand the importance of communicating in the language in which they are strongest at home. She wants the children to have rich conversations with their families, which Susana feels occur more often when families use the language in which they are most familiar.

To meet her goal of increased competence in bilingual education for English language learners, Susana feels, “I need to take some courses and workshops about bilingual education in early childhood and supporting families to retain their primary language and culture. I have much to learn about current research and findings about best practices to support linguistic and cultural diversity.” You appreciate Susana’s interest in continuing her learning in this area and you know her students and their families will benefit from her drive to learn more. Later in this chapter, you will read about supporting linguistic and cultural diversity.

Families are such an important component of all early childhood programs. Let’s head to Felipe’s home with Susana.

**HOME VISITS: CONNECTING HOME AND SCHOOL.** Susana visits each family at their home five times a year. Every visit has a focus, as well as time to talk about the child’s progress and any questions or concerns the family might raise. Home visits support the connection between home and school and improve communication. Figure 9.5 shows an overview of the home visits and parent/teacher conferences.

Prior to the visit, Susana calls the family to schedule a time to meet and to share the primary reason for the visit. “I want them to have time to think about the topic so we can share ideas during the discussion,” she explains. The five topics for this year include:

- Orientation to the program, including completing any paperwork or forms
- Developing the educational plan
- Educational projects (includes projects that support the child’s educational plan)
Since you and Susana have an appointment with Felipe’s family, it’s time to leave. Today, the focus is making a poster about Felipe.

A Home Visit with Felipe’s Family

This is Susana’s fourth visit of the year to Felipe’s home. She sent home a note to remind Felipe’s family about materials they might want to have ready for the poster—perhaps photographs and ideas about favorite foods, friends, or places. Susana brings a basket of ribbons, glue, scissors, and fabric scraps for decorating the poster.
Felipe’s Family

You drive with Susana and arrive at the apartment complex where Felipe lives with his mother, brother Antonio, and grandmother. Susana tells you, “Our conversation will be in Spanish if the grandmother is home. If she is not there, we will converse in English. Felipe’s mother is fluent in both English and Spanish. I always ask the family the first time I meet them if we should talk in Spanish or English. It is most important for us to have a good discussion in the strongest language of the family.” Felipe and Antonio are waiting outside the door. “Hello. Here we are.” calls Felipe. Felipe’s mother, Anna, is standing at the door. “Welcome and come inside, please,” greets Anna. Anna shares, “My mother is at church, making projects for the upcoming church bazaar. She said to tell you hello and hopes to be here for our next home visit.”

POSTER PROJECT: FOCUS ON FELIPE’S IDENTITY. After greetings are exchanged and Anna serves coffee, Susana starts unpacking her basket. “Well, everyone, I hope you will enjoy this project as much as I do,” shares Susana. She pulls out a questionnaire to get the conversation about Felipe started. “Let’s talk about Felipe’s favorite things, and then he can make some pictures and glue them on the poster.” Felipe says, “I like Street Sharks and dinosaurs. Can I start making them for the poster?” “Yes, go ahead and start drawing,” responds Susana. “What about favorite foods?” “Oh, ice cream, always more ice cream.” Susana writes Felipe’s name at the top of the poster and leaves room for a photograph. She then writes Favorite Food: Ice Cream below his name. Felipe says, “Here are the Street Sharks.” Susana writes Favorite Toy: Street Sharks on the poster. Susana asks Felipe if he and Antonio would like to make some ice-cream cones with the construction paper. “Sure, we can make different colors,” replies Felipe.

They look at the photographs that Anna has on the table. Anna tells about Felipe as a toddler. “See him riding his truck with Antonio? He always loved to be moving.” Felipe chooses that photograph to put on his poster, “Oh, I want the one with the truck and Antonio.” Antonio asks, “Can I glue this one?” Felipe helps him use the glue stick and says, “You did a good job, Antonio.” After adding his favorite color (red) and his favorite friend (Miguel), the poster is finished. Susana asks the family, “Doesn’t this look wonderful? We will bring this to school for a few days to share. Felipe, you can tell your friends at school about the pictures on your poster. Then you will bring this home to keep.”

ANNA’S JOB. With the poster project finished, Felipe and Antonio leave the table to play. Susana asks Anna to tell you about her job at Pine Hill Elementary School. “I am a teacher’s assistant working with younger children and helping them with their reading and English. In first grade, many of the children learn to read in Spanish. Over half of the children speak Spanish as their first language. As they get older, more of their instruction and assignments are in English. I feel fortunate to be able to use my Spanish to help the children. School is important and they must learn as much as they can. Felipe will start kindergarten there next year. I am very proud of him.” Anna has worked at the school for two years. She was divorced from Felipe’s father several years ago. His father is involved in Felipe’s preschool program and assisted on the last field trip. Anna adds, “I want the best possible for my two sons. We will work hard together to help them do well in school.”

ANNA’S HOPES FOR HER SONS: DEVELOPING IN TWO CULTURES AND LANGUAGES. Anna’s work at the elementary school provides her with a larger view of the complexity of bilingualism and biculturalism. Being raised in a country different from where one’s parents were raised and learning a new language different from the home language has both benefits and challenges for families. Anna shares her belief about preserving the family’s Hispanic heritage: “Felipe was born here, but my parents are from Mexico. My mother lives with us and helps a lot with the boys. She does not speak much English, so it is good for Felipe and Antonio to talk with her in Spanish. I try to have them teach her some English, too. She helps me cook meals and watches the boys if I have errands or appointments. Sometimes I cook American-type food, while other times we might have tortillas, beans, and rice. I want the boys to learn about both cultures and languages.”
Susana compliments Anna on her thoughtfulness in continuing the boys’ culture. “It’s important for them to learn about their heritage and customs in Mexico. You are doing a wonderful job teaching them about Hispanic ways while also preparing them for school.”

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT.** Anna serves on the Policy Council at Head Start. She shares, “I learn a lot about schools at work that I can share with other parents. At Head Start, the parents work together with the teachers. I think it is important for parents to learn to be involved in their children’s school. When we learn this at Head Start, then we can continue our involvement when our children start kindergarten in the public schools. We learn that we do have good questions and that our children learn better when we know what is going on at school.”

You think about the long-term impact made by involving parents during the preschool years, and realize that Anna has shared some insightful knowledge. All parents need to feel welcome at schools, and learning this in the preschool involvement helps parents continue to interact with their children’s schools.

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**JOURNAL 9.4** If you were the teacher in a program with children and their families speaking languages other than English, how might you encourage parents to become involved in their child’s education and related activities?

**SAYING GOOD-BYE.** Susana notes the time. The visit was scheduled for one hour. First, Susana tells Felipe, “You have been working very hard in school—I want to share that with you and your family. And also to let everyone know how helpful you are with the other children. I know you always try to help others work out problems.” Then Susana thanks Anna: “We appreciate your time with us this afternoon and your work on the Policy Council. You have a lot of important knowledge and insights to share with parents.” Anna calls the boys over: “Let’s say good-bye to teacher Susana and her guest.” Felipe says, “Thank you for helping me make the pictures, teacher Susana.” Antonio adds, “When I get bigger, can we make one for me, too?” Susana assures Antonio, “Yes, when you are 4 we will make your poster!”

Susana reminds Anna, “Our next home visit is in five weeks and we will talk about Felipe’s transition to kindergarten. Please think of any questions you have and we can talk about those. Also, remember you can call me any afternoon.” Anna shares, “I have been thinking about kindergarten, so I’m glad that’s our next topic. Thank you, Susana.” You also thank Felipe, Anna, and Antonio for the enjoyable and informative visit.

With this introduction to Felipe and his family’s experience with preschool, let’s take a closer look at Head Start and other preschool programs.

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**What Is Head Start?**

**History of Head Start**

Head Start was implemented in 1965 as a comprehensive program to help children from low-income families gain access to educational, social, and health services prior to entering kindergarten. It was viewed as a transition program to prepare children to be successful in their initial public school experience. In the memo shown in Figure 9.6, you can capture some of the excitement and energy behind the beginning of Head Start.

During the 1960s, there was a heightened awareness of the effects of children living in poverty on their later education and life success. As a nation, there was concern about these young children, which prompted development of a program to help break the cycle of failure. Head Start was part of the War on Poverty. Because the recipients were young...
children, it was supported by many legislators, including President Lyndon B. Johnson and much of the general public.

In the summer of 1965, Head Start was launched as a national program under the direction of Dr. Julius Richmond, a pediatrician, and Jule Sugarman. Nearly half a million children enrolled in Head Start that first summer, receiving educational programs, medical and dental attention, social services, and nutritious meals. The program soon evolved into a nine-month program, continuing an emphasis on education, social services, and family involvement. Through the history and evolution of Head Start, there have been many program changes, although much of the original philosophy is in place. Head Start is considered “one of the most successful federal programs in the nation’s history” (Schorr, 2004, p. xv).

Program Goals

Although changes have occurred in Head Start over the past 40 years, many of the current program goals are similar to those you would have seen in the early years of the program. The overall goal of Head Start is to provide comprehensive services that “foster healthy development in low-income children” leading to an increase in school readiness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

In each state and community, Head Start looks slightly different. Some programs find their community health or social services offer adequate resources for their families, and view the role of Head Start as helping families access existing services. Programs are allowed flexibility within the structure of federal guidelines, which enables local communities to develop programs to reflect their needs.

To meet the major program goals, assessment of activities and accomplishments within the areas of education, social services, and family involvement is required to determine if goals have been met. The next section looks at each of these areas and discusses how these components support the child and family.

**EDUCATION: CURRICULUM FOR THE WHOLE CHILD.** As you saw in Felipe’s classroom, the school day includes activities to support learning in each developmental
As in many preschools, there is a commitment to developmentally appropriate curriculum. Curriculum is planned to meet the current needs of 3- and 4-year-old children and to help children be successful in kindergarten and school in general. The curriculum includes lessons and activities that promote cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. The goals from each child’s individual education plan influence the curriculum. Attention in the curriculum is also given to the cultural background of the families in the program and of the larger community.

The curriculum that Susana developed includes many activities that encourage active play and social interactions. During the morning, children are involved in large group activities (circle time) and in small groups (choice and project time). She alternates activities that are teacher directed with activities that allow for more individual choice. Most 4-year-olds are beginning to be able to stay with an interesting project for an extended time period, so Susana plans some longer time blocks (45 minutes) for projects. Not only does this allow children to explore and create projects but it also helps them stay focused on an activity, which is a skill they will need in kindergarten the following year. Many of the activities that you saw in Felipe’s class would be found in other preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-old children, as well.

Social Services and Resources for Families. Head Start programs are an important resource for many low-income families. Although families may have accessed different social services prior to their child’s enrollment in Head Start, this is often the first time these services are coordinated, with assistance available to help strengthen the entire family. Figure 9.7 discusses some of the family services available.

Through support of the entire family and their needs, a child is more likely to experience a healthier home environment, leading to improved learning. For example, in times of monetary crisis, Head Start staff is able to refer parents to the appropriate agency to access food stamps, thus ensuring that the family is able to obtain food.

Medical and dental screenings are also provided through Head Start. Prior to enrollment, a child has a physical examination and must be current with immunizations. If parents are unable to pay for these services, Head Start will assist them in obtaining medical services, and, in some programs, Head Start will pay for necessary medical care.
Another social service focuses on nutrition. A nutrition assessment is conducted with each family. Children and their families receive nutritional counseling during the year, with specific outcomes established for each family based on the nutritional assessment. Children also eat two meals during their day at Head Start, which are planned to meet the federal guidelines for nutritional requirements.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT.** Each Head Start program offers various opportunities for family involvement. As you learned earlier, Felipe’s mother, Anna, serves on the Policy Council, which works with Head Start administration to make program decisions. Other parent options include volunteering in or preparing materials for the classroom, attending parenting classes, helping on field trips or projects, and assisting in fund-raising activities or special events. In many programs, family events are planned throughout the year to encourage interactions between families.

Besides these activities, parents are involved in the program through their role in developing their child’s education plan, and by participating in parent/teacher conferences and home visits. Family involvement is clearly a priority in all Head Start programs.

**HEAD START AND PRESCHOOL.** Head Start programs and preschool programs serve children of the same age—3- and 4-year-olds. Head Start was selected for this...
chapter in this book for several reasons. Generally, it is far more comprehensive than many preschool programs. Few preschools have the funding to support parental involvement and social services in the capacity that Head Start does. Highlighting Head Start in this chapter enables you to observe a broad, comprehensive program for children of preschool age. The curriculum of many preschool programs is similar to Felipe’s program. Thus, you are gaining knowledge about quality programs for 3- and 4-year-olds while also learning about support services for children and their families associated with Head Start. A look at preschool programs and at some general commonalties between preschool and Head Start will help describe a variety of programs available for this age group.

Preschool Programs

Preschools of Yesterday and Today

Preschools were called nursery schools in the early 1900s. Rachel and Margaret McMillan are considered to be pioneers in education for young children. These sisters were concerned about the health and development of children in England and consequently established a “nurture school” in the slums of London in 1911. The program in these schools included preventive health care (bathing, dressing in clean clothes, nutritious meals, and rest) and outdoor play. The goal of these activities was to nurture the child and to address the needs of children living in poverty. Some of these same goals are seen in preschool and Head Start programs today.

THE BEGINNING OF PRESCHOOL: A BRIEF HISTORY. In the United States, Abigail Eliot began the nursery school movement in 1922. Eliot had worked in England with the McMillan sisters as they developed the first nursery schools. Many of the early nursery schools in the United States were connected to colleges or universities and were viewed as a rich setting for teacher preparation and research. Eliot emphasized the need for a program to be established at nursery schools, with activities planned each day as part of this program. A major interest of Eliot’s was the involvement of parents in their child’s education. Her background was in social work and she viewed the relationship between parents and children as an important component of nursery school programs. Many people attribute the focus on parental involvement in early childhood to this emphasis initiated by Abigail Eliot.

In the 1930s, during the Depression, a large number of public school teachers found themselves out of work. Under the Works Project Administration (WPA), unemployed teachers were hired to work in nursery schools. Because of government funding for these unemployed teachers, the number of nursery schools increased significantly. As the Depression ended and World War II began, federal funding was no longer available for the WPA nursery schools. Child care programs were developed during World War II for the children of mothers working in war-related industry through the Lanham Act.

At the end of World War II, government funding for child care programs stopped. Program support now came from tuition fees paid by families. In the early 1950s, parent-cooperative nursery schools began to spring up around the country. Cooperative nursery schools provided child care and education at reasonable costs, with parents involved in the school administration and the day-to-day running of the school. Because many nursery schools required tuition or time commitments from parents, nursery school education was primarily available for children from middle-class families. With this change, less emphasis was given to health care and the school day was shortened, often with 3-year-olds attending a program two mornings a week and 4-year-olds attending nursery school three mornings each week. Parent-cooperative preschools are still in existence today, as you saw when you visited the preschool in Chapter 3.
Preschools of Today. Parents looking for a preschool for their child have many different options available. Preschool programs are now part of the day at most child care centers and home care centers. The preschool portion of the day might be a half-day or full-day program. Parent-cooperative preschools are often half-day programs, several days per week, although some are on a full-day schedule. Another type of preschool program is connected to universities. These programs, which are often called laboratory schools, serve as a site for research and the study of child development and education. Some churches provide preschool programs, as well, with financial support subsidized by the church.

As you can see, there are many options for parents to examine as they select a preschool program for their child. Parents would want to observe at the preschool and discuss program goals, schedules, priorities, and family involvement with the program director and caregivers before making a decision about enrolling their child. The curriculum and day-to-day activities differ widely at these preschools.

Preschool Curriculum. Some preschools might focus on art, music, and movement, whereas others may have a strong academic focus. When selecting a preschool program, parents should be knowledgeable about early childhood education—for example, it would be important for parents to assure that the curriculum content is designed to be developmentally and individually appropriate. Developmentally appropriate includes age appropriateness (based on what is determined to be appropriate for this age group), and individually appropriate accounts for the staff’s knowledge of individual needs and interests. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) describe components of a preschool program that is developmentally appropriate practice. Examples include:

- Daily opportunities exist for aesthetic expression in a variety of forms and media.
- Learning environment encourages children’s initiative, exploration, and interactions with other children.
- Teachers bring child’s home culture and language into the shared culture of the preschool.
- Children have opportunities to plan, think about, reflect on, and revisit their own experiences.
- Children have choices and options in their selection of learning experiences.

Preschool curriculum also includes experiences that promote learning in each area of development (i.e., physical, emotional, social, and cognitive). Remember how Susana plans for her students? She uses a format that reminds her to include each of these developmental areas throughout the morning. Susana also sets up centers around the room, and checks to make sure the centers include activities in each of the developmental areas, as well as encourage active engagement in learning and with other children.

Many preschool programs approach cognitive learning through inquiry and exploration. Rather than being told information or completing worksheets, preschoolers are experimenting and testing theories such as plant growth through a gardening center and later observation and discussion of these plants. This approach to learning enables children to construct their own understandings as they explore, interact, and actively engage in learning.

Early Literacy. The International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) developed a position statement on early literacy development that provides guidance to those who work with young children. Many educators view the position statements as standards for best practice. With preschool-aged children, experiences that support literacy learning would include the following:

- Print-rich environments with opportunities for children to see and use written language
- Adult reading of high-quality children’s literature on a daily basis
- Experiences that encourage children to talk about books and focus on the sounds and parts of language as well as the meaning
• Activities that incorporate literacy tools, such as writing notes to each other or making signs for a building
• Experiences that expand the child’s vocabulary, such as trips in the community and introduction to a variety of materials and resources

CREATIVE ARTS IN PRESCHOOL. The creative arts hold an important place in preschool curriculum, including drawing, painting, music, storytelling, and dramatic play. Preschoolers enjoy using novel materials to create projects. Miller (2003) recommends the following:
• Prepare materials so children have options and choices of open-ended projects.
• Arrange materials for easy access.
• Provide enough time for children to explore without rushing.
• Encourage children to initiate their own ideas.
• Express your own interest and enthusiasm for creative activities with the children.

Purposeful planning on the teacher’s part enables children to be creative and experience the joy of discovery in the arts. Art is integral to life itself, and an integral component of early childhood curriculum (Althouse, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2003).

JOURNAL 9.5 Think of a creative art activity appropriate for preschool-aged children. Sketch a center to support this activity. What materials would you have available? What would be the purpose of the activity or learning gained by the preschool children?

MOVEMENT FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT. Indoor and outdoor play can enhance movement programs and provide children opportunities to develop physical skills. However, movement programs must be planned around the developmental needs of each child and the group as a whole. Including daily developmentally appropriate movement experiences has the potential to help children become physically active and healthy throughout their lives (Sanders, 2002). Young children who learn foundational motor skills (throwing, catching, kicking, skipping, running, etc.) are more likely to continue to participate in physical activities. The preschool curriculum should include time for choice of physical activities, as well as planning developmentally appropriate physical activities. Some educators might choose to use a checklist of motor skills to assist in curriculum planning, noting when specific skills might be used in a game or outdoor play, and when it might be appropriate to plan an activity when the skill will be practiced.

Outdoor play also provides a space for children to learn to respect and enjoy the natural environment (Woyke, 2004). A sense of wonder can be experienced each time a child is outdoors. In no other place can a child discover a bird nest in a tree near the playground, different kinds of birds feeding from the bird feeder the children constructed, or snowflakes landing on the tongue, or throwing oneself into a pile of leaves, Making time in the curriculum to explore nature is a way to support a lifelong respect and wonder for the natural environment.

HEALTH TOPICS IN PRESCHOOL. Those of us who work with young children are well aware of the importance of frequent hand washing, as we have all encountered many of the same colds and flu experiences as the children in our care. But what other health topics are appropriate for 3- and 4-year olds to learn in preschool? In this section we will focus on the topics of nutrition and fitness.

Nutrition and fitness have become more and more a focus in early childhood programs as the country is faced with the critical health issue of increasing obesity in young children. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2002) has found that over 20 percent of children ages 2 to 5 are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is linked to major health risks, such as diabetes, damage to organ systems, and high blood pressure. It is clear that childhood obesity causes significant negative effects on the physical and...
emotional health of young children (Huettig et al., 2004). In the curriculum, including attention each day to nutrition and to physical activity can lead to changes in preschool children’s choices of food selection and activity selection (Sorte & Daeschel, 2005). Sorte and Daeschel recommend the following:

- Use books, songs, and puppets to build vocabulary and knowledge about the body.
- Include frequent opportunities to taste and discuss new foods, particularly fruits, vegetables, and whole foods.
- Each day, build in several times where children are actively learning to jump, run, skip, dance, and move freely, particularly in outdoor play.
- Introduce child-appropriate food preparation and cooking activities with nutritional foods.

SAFETY AND THE PRESCHOOL CHILD. Although safety is the primary concern of the caregiver, there are also ways to weave learning about safety into the preschool curriculum. Topics appropriate to this age group might include safety around cars, safe outdoor play, safety around strangers, and fire safety. In this section we will provide an overview of teaching preschool children about fire safety, and provide resources for additional information on teaching the other topics noted.

Young children often associate fire with candles on a birthday cake or a fire in a fireplace or an outdoor barbeque. It is typically a “friendly” association and leads the child to believe it is easy to control fire (Cole, Crandall, & Kourofksy, 2004). Fireproof Children (www.playsafe besafe.com) is an international fire safety and prevention center that focuses on two major actions: keeping children safe in a fire and preventing fire play. This program is available for preschool programs and includes the following four curriculum lessons:

1. Teach children to go to a firefighter in an emergency.
2. Teach children that the safest way to get out of a smoke-filled room is to crawl out of the room.
3. Teach children to “Stop, drop, and roll.”
4. Teach children that matches and lighters are for adults, and that they should tell an adult if they see one or see someone else touch one of these tools.

Follow-up studies have found that preschool children are capable of understanding these lessons.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE PRESCHOOL. In Felipe’s classroom, there were two computers available for student use. Software that encouraged creativity through drawing and problem solving were the most frequently used programs. Susana had set up icons on the screen that connected with the project theme students were exploring. While studying plants, the children were able to click on a plant icon and select different programs that included drawing plants, arranging the order of the life cycles of plants, and simple problem solving with plants. When using the programs, the children were able to store and retrieve their work and return to the problem for further investigation. These programs help children move toward symbolic thinking and engage in more advanced problem solving, which are appropriate uses of technology with young children (Swaminathan & Wright, 2003).

Figure 9.8 presents several questions to assist a preschool teacher in setting up a computer center and considering best practices in use of the computer and software. For further information about supporting early childhood curriculum with technology, an excellent source is the Center for Best Practices in Early Childhood Education at Western Illinois University.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HEAD START AND OTHER PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS. It is difficult to make specific comparisons between Head Start and all other preschool programs. Head Start programs around the country differ from each other, as do preschool programs. There are several commonalities that most
Programs for 3- and 4-year-olds share, however. Most all Head Start and preschool programs include art, music, and movement activities. Play is another common aspect, as play provides for many enjoyable learning experiences appropriate for this age group. Listening to stories read by adults is another favorite activity of children this age.

The emphasis on beginning academics varies widely among preschools. Most preschools leave these skills for later years, although a few schools do begin teaching the alphabet and printing letters and numbers. In the move toward a developmentally appropriate curriculum, there is increased emphasis on creating a balance in cognitive, language, social, and emotional development, with free-play and project-based learning important parts of the curriculum.

As mentioned earlier, a major difference between preschools and Head Start is found in the support for families and access to social and health services. Head Start is highly regarded for its comprehensive program, which attends to social, educational, and family services in order to support the development of the whole child. Although some preschools have lists of community resources and local agencies, they typically have less connection to social services as in Head Start programs.

Two critical learnings gained from research on Head Start experiences are the importance of involving parents in the child’s education and the need for the preschool curriculum to address individual education plans. Incorporating these two program components as goals of any preschool program strengthen the overall program, regardless of the family income level. A priority of both Head Start and high-quality preschool programs is the importance of qualified and prepared staff. Although there are guidelines established in each state and by the NAEYC, some programs might adapt these requirements to meet local needs, such as staff having competence in the home language of the children in the program.

**Preschool Staff**

Staffing patterns vary from program to program, often based on the number of children enrolled. In 2004, 91 percent of Head Start teachers held at least an associate degree (A.A.) or a child development associate credential (CDA). The CDA credential means an individual has documented his or her training and experience in the early childhood education field.
profession and has met established criteria. Sixty-five percent of teachers held an A.A. or higher, and 34 percent had a bachelor’s degree (B.A.) or higher (Hamm & Ewen, 2005). In 2008, all newly hired and half of all Head Start teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related field.

To meet these requirements, some programs developed flexible learning options to enable current teacher assistants to receive their associate degree. Sixteen tribal colleges have partnered with American Indian Programs Branch of the Head Start Bureau to develop early childhood associate degree programs for Head Start teachers and staff. Nearly 400 students were to graduate from the tribal college Head Start programs by 2004. This program has had a positive impact on the local communities and the future of these tribes (Wetsit, 2002).

Three positions are common at most preschool programs: program director, teacher, and teacher assistant. In Head Start Programs, federal guidelines require additional positions, mainly to support families and ensure all educational, social, and health needs of the child and family are met. In many centers, parents are hired in paraprofessional roles.

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR.** The program director assumes responsibility for administration of the program. She has training or experience in administration and is responsible for administrative decisions. For example, when a staff position is open, the program director would work with an advisory group to conduct interviews and make a decision about hiring new staff. If the program director is an early childhood specialist, she would likely assume the role of directing the educational component of the program.

**TEACHER.** Since you spent time talking with and observing Susana, you are aware of her professional responsibilities. She plans and carries out the curriculum, makes home visits, conducts parent/teacher conferences, and records the progress and development of the children. Teachers are expected to hold a degree in early childhood education or child development, or have extensive experience or training that qualifies them for the position of teacher.

**TEACHER ASSISTANT.** Teacher assistants work under the direct supervision of the teacher and usually have a high school diploma or equivalent, experience working with young children, and some training in early childhood. The teacher assistant works closely with the teacher, children, and families. Rita is familiar with Susana’s curriculum and her guidance procedures and follows these in her interactions with the children.

Quality of and access to preschool programs are current issues and concerns at the local, state, and national levels.

### Current Issues in Preschool Programs

Many of the issues and trends in preschools relate to the need for high-quality programs. Research has provided evidence that high-quality preschool programs “contribute to children’s readiness to enter school and remain on grade” (Schweinhart, 2001).

**HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL.** How does one determine if a preschool program is of high quality? Currently, fewer than half of the programs in early education earn a “good” or “high” rating (Espinosa, 2002). The quality of early education and care has a significant influence on a child’s social and academic development, and children at risk for school failure are more strongly influenced by the quality of their preschool (Espinosa, 2002). With these findings in mind, it is apparent that not only the program, but the quality of the program impacts a child.

What are the recommendations to create preschool programs that are considered to be of high quality? Espinosa (2002) makes the following five policy recommendations:

1. Develop state standards that address preschool teacher qualifications, group size, and class ratios. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has
created standards for preschool programs that can be adopted at state levels and provide the framework and expectations for quality programs.

2. Improve teacher salaries and benefits to the levels of comparably qualified K–12 teachers. Many preschool teachers make approximately one-half of the salary that a public school teacher earns per year. Quality programs require quality staff, and improving salaries for preschool teachers is an issue that requires attention.

3. Develop measures of early educational quality that include recent research findings on early literacy, mathematical, scientific, and social-emotional learning. With a wealth of research in early childhood education available, it is critical for program developers to review the research and literature and to implement program curriculum built on this knowledge base.

4. Provide continuous education and improvement efforts for preschool teachers and programs. Related to efforts to implement program curriculum and components based on research findings is the need to provide professional development opportunities for preschool teachers and other professionals involved in early childhood education. Dissemination through training and workshops will enable those in the field to make changes consistent with the current knowledge base in early childhood education.

5. Collaborate at the federal, state, and local levels to establish a coordinated system of high-quality education and care for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Rather than independent efforts to improve programs, a coordinated effort (of both program design and financial aspects) will lead to a stronger and more consistent system for change.

Head Start programs are designed to be of high quality and to meet federal program standards. Currently, there are changes to the program requirements that impact Head Start Programs.

**EMPHASIS ON ASSESSING COGNITIVE LEARNING.** Following the 1998 reauthorization of Head Start, Congress mandated that Head Start programs implement standards leading to increased attention in the Head Start curriculum to early literacy, numeracy, and language. All Head Start programs must comply with the Program Performance Standards, which are designed to ensure that Head Start goals and objectives are implemented and that all programs and agencies provide the highest quality services (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2003a). The Head Start Bureau worked with early childhood experts to develop assessment formats, resulting in the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. Children are assessed three times a year on the mandated items, as well as other areas that the program determines. Each program then submits the results to the National Reporting System and utilizes this data to make continual improvements in their program (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

However, there is much controversy about the narrow emphasis on testing preacademic skills, which seems to be in sharp contrast with the program goals of preparing the “whole child” for school. If testing focuses on preacademic skills, where is the value in the curriculum for social and emotional development of young children as well as the relationship of these areas of development to learning? Significant issues have been raised about the reliability of the standardized tests, including testing at such a young age, bias toward children with high socioeconomic status and Caucasian culture, and the use of a standardized tests of young children to determine program quality (Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2004). These questions must be addressed as the answers greatly impact the entire program goals and curriculum for young children in Head Start.

**RESEARCH ON PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN.** A major research project began in 1997, called the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Study. Early findings report that from the 3,200 children studied, Head Start classroom quality is good; Head Start children are acquiring early literacy, numeracy, and social skills; and program quality is connected to children’s performance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). The study also found teachers’ education affected program quality and children’s learning. These findings have implications for all early childhood
programs. For example, the findings that higher levels of program quality are linked to higher levels of teachers’ education and experiences translates to the need for ensuring that teacher qualifications are reviewed when hiring or considering continuing education for current teaching staff. This longitudinal study will be continued for several years.

Another important issue in preschool programs is the need to develop responsive environments to support the rapidly increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

Supporting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The term *cultural diversity* refers to the unique collection of beliefs, practices, traditions, and worldviews that characterize a particular group of people and, in the classroom setting, to “variations in needs or play and learning styles of children of various cultural groups” (Travick-Smith, 2006, p. 12). Linguistic diversity, or language minority students, are children who participate in a non-English-speaking environment and are exposed to an English-speaking environment in the school setting (Garcia, 2002). In the broader picture, children and their families may be considered linguistically or culturally diverse although they speak English. For example, a child might be a third-generation member of a family speaking English, yet “maintain the dominant accent of [his or her] heritage language” (NAEYC, 1996a, p. 7), or cultural values, beliefs, or customs. As the number of young children who are culturally and linguistically diverse increases, early childhood educators are attempting to meet the challenge of providing programs to meet the needs of these children and their families.

Cultural Diversity of Young Children

The demographics of the population making up the United States is changing rapidly. Children in early childhood programs today represent different cultural and linguistic backgrounds than the children of 10 years ago and the children you will be working with in the future. As Figure 9.9 depicts, in 2004, 43 percent of the students enrolled in public schools were considered to be part of a racial or ethnic minority group. In comparison, the percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 78 percent in 1972 to 57 percent in 2004. In fact, in six states and most large cities, the number of non-Hispanic Whites in the public schools are now in the minority (NCES, 2003). This is called the *minority majority*. These changing demographics present important data to early childhood educators, who are attempting to learn what is involved in becoming responsive educators for children from diverse cultures. Let’s look at teaching strategies and practices, as well as basic understandings, that support culturally and linguistically diverse children.

Creating an Environment Responsive to Diversity

In the past, the quickest route to success for immigrants arriving in the United States was to learn basic English and fit in with the dominant culture. High levels of English were not needed to earn a living. This is no longer the dominant view in education. Development of language is closely
connected to cognitive development. Learning in the first language helps a young child gain knowledge (NAEYC, 1996a) more than attempting to learn the same knowledge in a language in which the child has little comprehension. NAEYC’s recommendations for early childhood education for cultural and linguistic diversity include the following:

- Recognize that all children are cognitively, linguistically, and emotionally connected to the language and culture of their home.
- Acknowledge that children can demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities in many ways.
- Understand that without comprehensible input, second-language learning can be difficult.

These recommendations help create a learning environment that supports continued growth in the child’s first language as she learns English, while also supporting and honoring the language and culture in her home (see Box 9.1).

**JOURNAL 9.6** Describe an activity that might be done at home with a 4-year-old child to reinforce learning in the first or home language.

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**BOX 4.1 A CLOSER LOOK**

**What Are Some Practices Implemented in Culturally Responsive Communities?**

The literature in teacher education has examined different teaching practices that contribute to student learning. These educational practices are often termed effective instructional or teaching strategies (Freiburg & Driscoll, 2005). Many of these strategies are also effective for learners in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Villegas and Lucas (2002) add to the importance of effective teaching strategies by emphasizing that culturally responsive teachers find ways to make the culture of the classroom inclusive of all students. The students’ background experiences reflect their cultural experiences. Acknowledgment and incorporation of these experiences into the child’s curriculum and instruction in the classroom helps students bridge the cultural gap between home and school.

Garcia (2002) recommends that teachers implement the following practices to create a culturally responsive learning community:

1. Bilingual/bicultural knowledge
2. High expectations of diverse students
3. Diversity viewed as an asset
4. Ongoing professional development on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity that address both instructional and curriculum development

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**BILINGUALISM.** Continued support of the primary home language, along with careful instruction in the target language (English), can help students acquire the benefits of bilingualism. Although students may have strong home language skills, they need time and practice to catch up to native English speakers to become fully bilingual. Such students may appear fluent, but will make greater gains when support is provided in both the home and target languages (Favela, 2007).

When Susana presents new information, she speaks in Spanish to assist children in gaining new knowledge in their home language. She wants the children to learn new concepts in their primary language, rather than learn new language and new concepts at the same time. She supports continued development in the children’s first language in tandem with English language learning. Susana’s active encouragement of families to continue speaking Spanish with their young children supports the cognitive development of the children. The continued use of the primary language at home also facilitates the family’s ability to communicate with each other.
The continued presence of both languages in this classroom promotes learning in the primary language and retention of the primary language while learning a second language. Susana’s teaching follows recommendations made by Krashen (1996):

1. Comprehensible input is provided in English, as long as students understand the subject matter (often music, art, or physical education) when it is presented in English (the second language).
2. New subject matter is taught in primary or first language, without translation.
3. Literacy development is presented in the first language.

All written material in Felipe’s classroom is displayed in Spanish and in English. For example, the job chart is written in Spanish, with English “subtitles” listed below each job. Developing literacy in the first language facilitates literacy development in a second language (Krashen, 1999). Students progress more quickly in learning to read when they do not make continual translations to understand written material.

Wong Fillmore and Snow (2002) raise concerns about possible problems that might occur when the expectation is that all children are to use the school’s language (English), even in their early transition into the school setting. If the home language is not English, the message conveyed to children and parents is that their home language has little role or value in the school. The process of socialization into the school culture can be made more positive when a teacher respects the students’ home languages and cultures, and acknowledges the critical role these play in the lives of the child and family.

When several different home or first languages are spoken by children in the classroom and the teacher does not speak these languages, knowledge of teaching strategies that promote successful learning for English language learners is critical. Recommendations for a multilingual situation include:

- Learn to speak several words in each of the children’s home language.
- Group children who speak the same language together at least once each day to help them continue language development.
- Arrange for an interpreter to assist in parent conferences and home visits.
- Include books, music, and games representative of each child’s cultural heritage in the classroom.

In addition to these recommendations, educators who incorporate project-based learning (such as the projects around the theme of spring in Felipe’s classroom) and cooperative learning (students working together in small groups) are building an environ-
ment that supports cultural and linguistic diversity. Children have opportunities to work together, share ideas, talk with each other, and learn to cooperate with others.

**VALUING CULTURAL DIVERSITY.** Creating a learning environment responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity is an important goal and challenge for each early childhood professional. Preserving and continuing the child’s first or home language and culture while learning English and the “school culture” supports an environment that honors and respects each child and family as well as helps the child develop to his fullest potential. García (1997) challenges early childhood educators to care about and be an advocate for our linguistically and culturally diverse children and families by nurturing, celebrating, and challenging them. They do not need our pity or remorse for what they do not have; they, like any individual and family, require our respect and the use of what they bring as a resource. (p. 13)

As our classrooms and centers become increasingly diverse, it is nearly impossible to be knowledgeable about each cultural group and its beliefs and attitudes about child development, education, and parenting. Although we may know about several different aspects or beliefs within a cultural group, there is great variation among individual beliefs within any group. Those who work with young children can learn from listening to parents and sharing personal perspectives as we come to understand our individual families’ goals for their children. Involving families is critical to the educational success of all children. Opportunities for involving families and engaging them in working and talking together with early childhood educators must be developed (Ramsey, 2004). Possibilities include asking families to share photographs, music, traditions, or family activities with the other children. Considering these suggestions and the importance of honoring each of our families and their cultures enables us to honor the diversity of our communities.

**Principles and Insights:**
**A Summary and Review of Chapter 9**

Your visit to Felipe’s preschool highlighted a focus on children and families. You saw children and several parents arriving on the bus together. The children went to their classrooms, while the parents headed for the adult education classroom or volunteered at the center. Through education, social services, and other family services, the child and family are supported in their development.

Your morning proved to be a busy one. Children were involved in projects, interactions, and activities
that encouraged their learning in each developmental area. Felipe and the other children in Susana’s class worked on several different activities related to the topic of spring, through art, music, listening to stories, expressing ideas, and connecting clothing and weather to spring. You observed many activities you might see in other preschool programs.

Felipe’s mother, Anna, serves on the Policy Council. His father often goes on field trips with the class. All parents participate in home visits and parent/teacher conferences, along with establishing educational goals for their child. Families are an integral component of the program, with the belief that helping the family is helping the child.

Susana is aware of the challenges of working with children speaking languages other than English. One of her priorities in teaching is to help parents understand the importance of bilingualism and biculturalism. Susana discusses the importance of maintaining the child’s home language with families. She also follows specific recommendations for creating a responsive environment for culturally and linguistically diverse children, communicating her respect for and appreciation of the richness children bring to the classroom.

Changes are needed in preschool programs. Some of these changes include increasing staff salaries, making curricular changes that reflect developmentally appropriate practices and responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity, acknowledging and adapting to needs of families, and ensuring quality in all programs. Research and evaluation of existing programs provide data to make improvements that promote successful early childhood practices.

By observing Felipe in his preschool program and meeting with his family and teacher, you had the opportunity to see why Head Start is considered the nation’s greatest educational experiment (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). The mission of Washington County Head Start (Figure 9.10) does, indeed, provide a framework for the holistic emphasis of education, social services, and family involvement woven together to create a quality program for preschool-aged children.

### Washington County Head Start

**Mission Statement**

Our Mission:
We will provide developmentally appropriate education and care for children, involve and support parents, and offer early childhood services that meet family needs.

Source: Community Action Organization Head Start. Reprinted by permission.

#### Becoming an Early Childhood Professional

**Your Professional Portfolio**

1. After observing a preschool, draw a diagram of the setting. Compare your diagram to the floor plan shown in Figure 9.1. What types of activities occur in different areas in the preschool room in which you observed? How is the space designed to encourage children to take initiative in projects and activities (e.g., sinks and faucets at a child’s level for independent use). Label the areas, furniture, and fixtures in the room and place the diagram in your portfolio.

2. In Felipe’s program, you observed his involvement in a project about springtime. If you were teaching 4-year-olds, what project might you like to incorporate into the curriculum? Develop your project idea in an outline form, including some major themes and resources you would want to make available for the children.

**Your Professional Library**


Your E-Resources

**Companion Website**

To access chapter objectives, practice tests, essay questions, and weblinks, visit the companion website at www.ablongman.com.authoredition.

“Fire Safety”

This clip outlines some of the precautions that should be taken to protect and prepare young child in the event of a fire.

Go to Allyn & Bacon’s MyLabSchool (www.mylabschool.com) and enter Assignment ID ECV3 into the Assignment Finder and watch the video entitled “Fire Safety.”

- As you watch this video, make a list of health and safety strategies. Aside from fires, what are other health and safety dangers are present in preschool settings? What can you do to better protect children from these dangers?

“Meal Time: Preschoolers”

In this clip, the teacher and her assistant sit and converse with the children as they eat lunch.

Enter Assignment ID ECV7 into the Assignment Finder and watch the video entitled “Meal Times: Preschoolers.”

- As you watch this video, identify the learning/development opportunities possible at meal time. What skills may children develop during this time? What should teachers do support a more cognitively enriching meal time?

“Implementing Curriculum that Supports Young Children’s Learning”


In the first clip, the background information provided in the annotations offers insight into the child’s need to read a particular book.

- As you watch this video, identify the positive aspects of the caregiver’s approach to reading the story. What does she do well?

In the next clip, Ms. Joan provides an interactive story time experience for the children in her class.

- How does this story time differ from the story time in the first clip?

In the last two videos, the preschool teacher discusses an activity with the whole group during circle time and then conducts the apple “taste test” described with a small group.

- What are the benefits of each type of activity? What might the children learn from the small group taste test?

MyLabSchool supports you in this course, your licensure exams, and your teaching career. You have access to video footage of real-life classroom scenarios, an extensive Case Study archive, Allyn & Bacon’s Lesson Plan & Portfolio Builder, Research Navigator (which includes EBSCO’s ContentSelect Academic Journal Database, New York Times Search by Subject Archive, and “Best of the Web” Link Library), and a Career Center with resources for PRAXIS exams and licensure preparation, professional portfolio development, job search, and interview techniques.