

should we seek more than one "right answer" from multiple theories? And why must aspiring teachers be *educated* rather than *trained*?

to say about scaffolding, and then I thought about Kohlberg and Gilligan and even Marcia's ideas about identity. But each theory would give you a different explanation. How can you tell which theory is the right answer in a particular situation?"

Connie looks up and says, "Is it possible that looking at a situation through the lenses of several theories might give us several right answers? And if so, what should you do with several right answers?"

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN (THREE, FOUR, AND FIVE YEARS)

Physical Characteristics: Preschool and Kindergarten

JOURNAL ENTRY

Active Games

JOURNAL ENTRY

Riot-Stopping Signals and Activities

JOURNAL ENTRY

Allowing for Large-Muscle Control

Large-muscle control better established than small-muscle control and hand-eye coordination

1. *Preschool children are extremely active. They have good control of their bodies and enjoy activity for its own sake.* Provide plenty of opportunities for children to run, climb, and jump. Arrange these activities, as much as possible, so that they are under your control. If you follow a policy of complete freedom, you may discover that thirty improvising three- to five-year-olds can be a frightening thing. In your Reflective Journal, you might note some specific games and activities that you could use to achieve semicontrolled play.
2. *Because of an inclination toward bursts of activity, kindergartners need frequent rest periods. They themselves often don't recognize the need to slow down.* Schedule quiet activities after strenuous ones. Have rest time. Realize that excitement may build up to a riot level if the attention of "catalytic agents" and their followers is not diverted. In your journal, you might list some signals for calling a halt to a melee (for example, playing the opening chords of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony on the piano) or for diverting wild action into more or less controlled activity (marching around the room to a brisk rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever").
3. *Preschoolers' large muscles are more developed than those that control fingers and hands. Therefore, preschoolers may be quite clumsy at, or physically incapable of, such skills as tying shoes and buttoning coats.* Avoid too many small-motor activities, such as pasting paper chains. Provide big brushes, crayons, and tools. In your journal, you might note other activities or items of king-sized equipment that would be appropriate for the children's level of muscular development.
4. *Young children find it difficult to focus their eyes on small objects. Therefore, their eye-hand coordination may be imperfect.* If possible, minimize the necessity for the children to look at small things. (Incomplete eye development is the reason for large print in children's books.) This is also important to keep in mind if you are planning to use computers or software programs; highly graphic programs requiring a simple point-and-click response are most appropriate for very young students.
5. *Although children's bodies are flexible and resilient, the bones that protect the brain are still soft.* Be extremely wary of blows to the head in games or fights between children. If you notice an activity involving such a blow, intervene immediately; warn the class that this is dangerous and explain why.
6. *Gender differences in physical development and motor skill proficiency are usually not noticeable until kindergarten and are fairly small in magnitude.* Differences that do manifest themselves are due in part to biological endowment and in part to differences in socialization (Berk, 2006). Consequently, you may want to encourage all children to participate in tasks that emphasize gross motor skills and tasks that emphasize fine motor skills.

Table 3.1 Applying Theories of Development to the Preschool and Kindergarten Years

Psychosocial development: initiative vs. guilt. Children need opportunities for free play and experimentation, as well as experiences that give them a sense of accomplishment.

Cognitive development: preoperational thought. Children gradually acquire the ability to conserve and decenter but are not capable of operational thinking and are unable to mentally reverse operations.

Moral development: morality of constraint, preconventional. Rules are viewed as unchangeable edicts handed down by those in authority. Punishment-obedience orientation focuses on physical consequences rather than on intentions.

General factors to keep in mind: Children are having their first experiences with school routine and interactions with more than a few peers and are preparing for initial academic experiences in group settings. They need to learn to follow directions and get along with others.

Social Characteristics: Preschool and Kindergarten

1. *Most children have one or two best friends, but these friendships may change rapidly. Preschoolers tend to be quite flexible socially; they are usually willing and able to play with most of the other children in the class. Favorite friends tend to be of the same gender, but many friendships between boys and girls develop. Young children generally interact with most of the other children in their preschool and kindergarten classes but think of their friends as those with whom they share toys and play the most. These "friendships" can dissolve quickly, however, if one child hits the other, refuses to share a toy, or is not interested in playing (Berk, 2006; Kail, 2007). Whereas some children prefer to play alone or observe their peers, others lack the skills or confidence to join others. In those cases, you might want to provide some assistance.*
2. *Younger children exhibit different types of play behavior, which may vary as a function of social class and gender. Kenneth Rubin, Terence Maioni, and Margaret Hornung (1976) observed and classified the free play of preschoolers according to their level of social and cognitive participation. The four levels of social participation*



Children engage in a variety of types of play. These patterns may vary as a function of social class and gender.

they observed were taken from the pioneering work of Mildred Parten (1932) and are as follows:

Solitary play. Children play alone with toys that are different from those used by other children within speaking distance of them. They make no attempt to interact with others.

Parallel play. Children play beside but not really with other children. They use the same toys in close proximity to others but in an independent way.

Associative play. Children engage in rather disorganized play with other children. There is no assignment of activities or roles; individual children play in their own ways.

Cooperative play. Children engage in an organized form of play in which leadership and other roles are assigned. The members of the group may cooperate in creating some project, dramatize some situation, or engage in some sort of coordinated enterprise.

The four levels of cognitive participation they observed were taken from the work of Sara Smilansky (1968), who based them on Piaget's work, and are as follows:

Functional play. Making simple, repetitive muscle movements with or without objects

Constructive play. Manipulating objects to construct or create something

Dramatic play. Using an imaginary situation

Games with rules. Using prearranged rules to play a game

Play patterns vary as a function of social class, gender, and age

Rubin et al. found that children of lower socioeconomic status (SES) engaged in more parallel and functional play than their middle-class peers, whereas middle-class children displayed more associative, cooperative, and constructive play. Girls engaged in more solitary- and parallel-constructive play and in less dramatic play than did boys. Boys engaged in more solitary-functional and associative-dramatic play than did girls.

Other forms of play described by researchers include pretend play (mimicking the behavior of parents, siblings, and peers), exercise play (running, climbing, jumping, and other large-muscle activities), and rough-and-tumble play (mostly wrestling types of activities, as well as pretend fighting) (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Smith, 2005).

3. *Preschool and kindergarten children show definite preferences for gender of play peers and for pair versus group play.* A three-year study (Fabes, Martin, & Hanish, 2003) of more than two hundred preschool children (average age 4.25 years) found the following play preferences:

- Same-sex play occurred more often than mixed-sex play.
- Girls were more likely than boys to play in pairs rather than groups, and boys were more likely than girls to play in groups rather than pairs. When girls did play in groups, they were more likely than boys to play in a group in which they were not the only member of their sex.
- When boys played with each other, whether in pairs or groups, they were more likely than girls who played with each other to engage in active-forceful play. This tendency was less apparent when a boy played in a group that was otherwise made up of all girls. But when a girl played in a group whose other members were boys, her level of active-forceful play tended to increase.

Gender differences in toy preferences and play activities noticeable by kindergarten

4. *Awareness of gender roles and gender typing is evident.* By the time children enter kindergarten, most of them have developed an awareness of gender differences and of masculine and feminine roles (Wynn & Fletcher, 1987). This awareness of gender roles shows up very clearly in the toys and activities that boys and girls prefer. Boys are more likely than girls to play outdoors, to engage in rough-and-tumble play, and to behave aggressively. Boys play with toy vehicles and construction toys, and they

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JOURNAL ENTRY

Encouraging Girls to Achieve,
Boys to Be Sensitive

engage in action games (such as football). Girls prefer art activities, doll play, and dancing (Carter, 1987). By age six, some children associate job titles that are considered to be gender neutral, such as doctor, librarian, and flight attendant, with either males (in the case of doctors) or females (in the case of librarians and waiters) (Liben, Bigler, & Krogh, 2002). Such strong gender typing in play activities occurs in many cultures, including non-Western ones, and is often reinforced by the way parents behave: they model what their culture has defined as gender-appropriate roles and encourage boys to be active and independent and girls to be more docile (Lancey, 2002). Peers may also reinforce these tendencies. A boy or girl may notice that other children are more willing to play when he or she selects a gender-appropriate toy.

Therefore, if you teach preschool children, you may have to guard against a tendency to respond too soon when little girls ask for help. If they *need* assistance, of course you should supply it; but if preschool girls can carry out tasks on their own, you should urge them to do so. You might also remind yourself that girls often need to be encouraged to become more achievement oriented and boys to become more sensitive to the needs of others.

Emotional Characteristics: Preschool and Kindergarten

1. *Kindergarten children tend to express their emotions freely and openly. Anger outbursts are frequent.* It is probably desirable to let children at this age level express their feelings openly, at least within broad limits, so that they can recognize and face their emotions. In *Between Parent and Child* (1965; Ginott, Ginott, & Goddard, 2003) and *Teacher and Child* (1972), Haim Ginott offers some specific suggestions on how a parent or teacher can help children develop awareness of their feelings. His books may help you work out your own philosophy and techniques for dealing with emotional outbursts.

Suppose, for example, that a boy who was wildly waving his hand to be called on during share-and-tell time later knocks down a block tower built by a girl who monopolized sharing time with a spellbinding story of a kitten rescued by firefighters. When you go over to break up the incipient fight, the boy angrily pushes you away. In such a situation, Ginott suggests you take the boy to a quiet corner and engage in a dialogue such as this:

You: It looks as if you are unhappy about something, Connor.

Boy: Yes, I am.

You: Are you angry about something that happened this morning?

Boy: Yes.

You: Tell me about it.

Boy: I wanted to tell the class about something at sharing time, and Lily talked for three hours, and you wouldn't let me say anything.

You: And that made you mad at Lily and at me?

Boy: Yes.

You: Well, I can understand why you are disappointed and angry. But Lily had an exciting story to tell, and we didn't have time for anyone else to tell what they had to say. You can be the very first one to share something tomorrow morning. Now how about doing an easel painting? You always do such interesting paintings.

Ginott suggests that when children are encouraged to analyze their own behavior, they are more likely to become aware of the causes of their feelings. This awareness, in turn, may help them learn to accept and control their feelings and find more acceptable means of expressing them. But because these children are likely to be in Piaget's preoperational stage of intellectual development, bear

JOURNAL ENTRY

Helping Students Understand
Anger

JOURNAL ENTRY

Ways to Avoid Playing Favorites

By age four, children have a theory of mind: aware of own mental processes and that others may think differently

in mind that this approach may not be successful with all of them. The egocentric orientation of four- to five-year-olds makes it difficult for them to reflect on the thoughts of self or others. Anger outbursts are more likely to occur when children are tired, hungry, or exposed to too much adult interference. If you take such conditions into account and try to alleviate them (by providing a nap or a snack, for example), temper tantrums may be minimized.

2. *Jealousy among classmates is likely to be fairly common, as kindergarten children have much affection for the teacher and actively seek approval. When there are thirty individuals competing for the affection and attention of just one teacher, some jealousy is inevitable.* Try to spread your attention around as equitably as possible, and when you praise particular children, do it in a private or casual way. If one child is given lavish public recognition, it is only natural for the other children to feel resentful. Think back to how you felt about teachers' pets during your own school years. If you have observed or can think of other techniques for minimizing jealousy, jot them down in your journal.

Cognitive Characteristics: Preschool and Kindergarten

1. *By age four, many children begin to develop a theory of mind.* Children's theory of mind concerns the ability of children around the age of four to be aware of the difference between thinking about something and experiencing that same thing and to predict the thoughts of others. Being able to make this distinction is critical to understanding such aspects of social life as surprises, secrets, tricks, mistakes, and lies.

By three years of age, most children realize the difference between thinking about something and actually experiencing that same something. But a significant change occurs around age four when children begin to realize that thoughts may be false. In one study described by Janet Astington (1998), a box that children knew normally contained candy was filled instead with pencils. When three-year-olds opened the box and discovered the pencils, they were asked what a friend would think was in the box before it was opened. They replied that the friend would know (just as they now did) that there were pencils inside. When they were asked later what they thought was in the box before it was opened, they replied "pencils" rather than "candy," indicating an inability to recall that their belief had changed. But four-year-olds understood that the friend would be misled by the fact that pencils had replaced the candy. The four-year-olds also remembered that they themselves had expected the box to contain candy. So, beginning at age four, children start to realize that the actions of people are based on how they *think* the world is.

Talking about different viewpoints will help children understand that people have beliefs about the world, that different people believe different things, and that beliefs may change when new information is acquired. Astington (1998) offers the following example of how teachers can foster the development of children's theory of mind:

In a 1st-grade classroom that I recently observed, the teacher often talked about her own thought processes, saying, for example, "I just learned something new" when she found out that one student had a pet rabbit at home. When she was surprised or made a mistake, she talked about her own wrong beliefs, and at story-time, she had the children talk about the motivations and beliefs of story characters. Her style of talk helped the class focus not just on the thought content, but also on the thinking process—yet the term *theory of mind* was unknown to this teacher. (p. 48)

JOURNAL ENTRY

Handling Sharing

2. *Kindergartners are quite skillful with language. Most of them like to talk, especially in front of a group.* Providing a sharing time gives children a natural opportunity for

Peer comparisons help four- and five-year-olds more accurately judge their capabilities

talking, but many will need help in becoming good listeners. Some sort of rotation scheme is usually necessary to divide talking opportunities between the gabby and the silent extremes. You might provide activities or experiences for less confident children to talk about, such as a field trip, a book, or a film. In your journal, you might note some comments to use if students start to share the wrong thing (such as a vivid account of a fight between their parents) or if they try to one-up classmates (for example, "Your cat may have had five kittens, but *our* cat had a *hundred* kittens"). For titillating topics, you might say, "There are some things that are private, and it's better not to talk about them to others."

3. *Many preschool and kindergarten children do not accurately assess their competence for particular tasks.* Preschool and kindergarten children typically think of themselves as being much more competent than they actually are, even when their performance lags behind that of their peers. They do not differentiate between effort and ability as factors that affect performance. Although this limitation in self-assessment is influenced, at least in part, by the characteristics of preoperational-stage thinking, it can also be the result of classroom environments that are relatively unstructured, that emphasize free play, and that de-emphasize peer-peer comparisons. Israeli children who grew up on a kibbutz, a communal form of living in which child rearing occurs as much within a peer group as within one's nuclear family, used peer comparison to construct a sense of their own competence about a year earlier than did urban children who spent most of their time within their own families (Butler, 2005).

Despite this limitation in self-assessed competence, research suggests that under the right conditions even some four-year-olds can draw accurate conclusions about how well or poorly they have completed a task. In one study, children between the ages of four and five were asked to do a simple maze-type task (tracing a winding path between an illustrated child and a house) under one of two conditions: either in the presence of another child's work or in comparison with their own earlier attempt at the same task. About 40 percent of those who had another child's work available were able to use that to accurately assess their own performance. Most of the rest of this group could gauge their own performance by using the goal as a basis for comparison ("I only got halfway to the house"). Children in the second group, however, were unable to use their prior performance on the maze to judge whether their current performance was any better or worse, even when shown both attempts. Self-assessment of competence under this condition does not typically appear until somewhere between seven and eight years of age (Butler, 2005).

4. *Competence is encouraged by interaction, interest, opportunities, urging, limits, admiration, and signs of affection.* Studies of young children rated as highly competent (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002; Clawson & Robila, 2001; Schweinhart, Weikart, & Hohmann, 2002) show that to encourage preschoolers to make the most of their abilities, adults should

- Interact with the child often and in a variety of ways.
- Show interest in what the child does and says.
- Provide opportunities for the child to investigate and experience many things.
- Permit and encourage the child to do many things.
- Urge the child to try to achieve mature and skilled types of behavior.
- Establish firm and consistent limits regarding unacceptable forms of behavior, explain the reasons for these as soon as the child is able to understand, listen to complaints if the child feels the restrictions are too confining, and give additional reasons if the limits are still to be maintained as originally stated.
- Show that the child's achievements are admired and appreciated.
- Communicate love in a warm and sincere way.

Diana Baumrind's (1971, 1991a) analysis of four types of child-rearing approaches shows why such techniques contribute to competence in children.

Baumrind found that parents of competent children are authoritative parents. They have confidence in their abilities as parents and therefore provide a model of competence for their children to imitate. When they establish limits and explain reasons for restrictions, they encourage their children to set standards for themselves and to think about why certain procedures should be followed. And because these parents are warm and affectionate, children value their positive responses as rewards for mature behavior. The children of authoritative parents tend to be self-motivated. They stand up for what they believe, yet are able to work productively with others.

Authoritarian parents, by contrast, make demands and wield power, but their failure to take into account the child's point of view and their lack of warmth lead to resentment and insecurity on the part of the child. Children of authoritarian parents may do as they are told, but they are likely to do so out of compliance or fear, not out of a desire to earn love or approval. They also tend to be other-directed rather than inner-directed.

Permissive parents, as defined by Baumrind, are disorganized, inconsistent, and lack confidence, and their children are likely to imitate such behavior. Permissive parents make few demands of their children, allow them to make many of their own decisions, do not require them to exhibit mature behavior, and tend to avoid confrontations with their children. As a result, such children are markedly less assertive and intellectually skilled than are children from authoritative homes.

Finally, **rejecting-neglecting parents** do not make demands on their children or respond to their emotional needs. They do not structure the home environment, are not supportive of their children's goals and activities, and may actively reject or neglect their child-rearing responsibilities. Children of rejecting-neglecting parents are the least socially and intellectually competent of the four types.

You might refer to these observations not only when you plan how to encourage competence but also when you think about the kind of classroom atmosphere you hope to establish.

pause & reflect

Given the characteristics of preschool and kindergarten children, what classroom atmosphere and instructional tactics would you use to foster learning and enjoyment of school?

PRIMARY GRADES (1, 2, AND 3; SIX SEVEN, AND EIGHT YEARS)

Physical Characteristics: Primary Grades

1. *Primary grade children are still extremely active. Because they are frequently required to participate in sedentary pursuits, energy is often released in the form of nervous habits—frequent pencil chewing, fingernail biting, and general fidgeting. To minimize fidgeting, avoid situations in which your students must sit glued to their desks for long periods. Have frequent breaks, and try to work activity (such as hanging papers to your desk) into the lessons themselves. When children use computer software that contains sound effects, distribute headphones to ensure that the concentration on their own work and to minimize distractions between students.*

One of the effects of the current emphasis on preparing students to meet state learning standards is the reduction or elimination of recess time, even for kindergarten and primary grade students. One survey, for example, found that 30 percent of kindergarten teachers did not have a recess period (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2000). Are educators going too far in seeking to reduce the number and length of breaks for young children in order to focus more intensively on teaching academic skills? Not according to cognitive development theory and research.

JOURNAL ENTRY

Building Activity into Class Work