



Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs, Second Edition

By Susan Sandall Ph.D., Ilene Schwartz Ph.D. BCBA-D, Hsin-Ying Chou Ed.D., Eva M. Horn Ph.D., Gail Joseph Ph.D., Joan A. Lieber Ph.D., Samuel L. Odom Ph.D., Ruth Wolery Ph.D.

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Updated for today's educators—especially those new to inclusion—the second edition of this bestselling guide is the lifeline preschool teachers need to fully include children with disabilities in their classrooms.

Easy to use with any existing curriculum, including Creative Curriculum and HighScope, *Building Blocks* gives educators three types of practical, research-based inclusion strategies that promote progress in critical areas like behavior, emergent literacy, and peer relationships. A must for professional development, this revised edition helps teachers thrive in the era of accountability with NEW material that reflects the six years of changes in early education since the first edition. Teachers will

- discover how the Building Blocks approach aligns with **OSEP outcomes** to help teachers meet the federal requirements for special education
- learn everything they need to know about **evidence-based practice** and how to apply it in their classrooms
- print more than a dozen helpful forms—including classroom assessments, planning worksheets, and child evaluation forms—with the **convenient NEW CD-ROM**

Through clear and instructive vignettes woven throughout the book, teachers will also meet four young children from diverse backgrounds and learn from their teachers' examples of successful interventions. A perfect training tool for teachers and an ideal textbook for college and university courses, this revised bestseller will help today's preschool educators start all their students on the road to lasting school success.

Promote inclusion and improve child outcomes through

- **curriculum modifications** that allow all children to participate
- **embedded learning opportunities** used in typical classroom activities
- **child-focused instructional strategies** that help students with individual learning objectives

A featured book in our Successful Early Childhood Inclusion Kit!

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Editorial Review

Review

"provides the "how-to" for implementing inclusive practices... ."
(Janice Myck-Wayne)

About the Author

Dr. Sandall is an assistant professor at the University of Washington in special education with a specialization in early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE). She has directed personnel preparation projects, developed curriculum materials for all age groups, and published materials on instructional strategies to facilitate optimal outcomes for young children with disabilities. Dr. Sandall is a board member of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), Council for Exceptional Children, and an investigator on DEC's research project to synthesize EI/ECSE research practices and translate them to recommended field practices. She is also co-editor of DEC's Young Exceptional Children monograph series and co-editor of DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (with Mary McLean and Barbara J. Smith, Sopris West, 2000).

Ilene S. Schwartz, Ph.D. is Professor at the University of Washington in the area of special education. Dr. Schwartz has an extensive background working with young children with special needs, specifically with young children with autism and other disabilities. Dr. Schwartz is the Director of the Haring Center for Research and Training in Inclusive Education at the University of Washington. Dr. Schwartz is the faculty advisor for the inclusive preschool and kindergarten programs at the Experimental Education Unit at the University of Washington, where she maintains an active line of research and personnel preparation activities. Dr. Schwartz is Principal Investigator of several projects, including a model demonstration project to develop school-based services for young children with autism, a research project to assess the differential effectiveness of preschool programs for young children with autism, and a personnel preparation program for early childhood education teachers who work with children with severe disabilities in inclusive settings. Dr. Schwartz has published numerous chapters and articles about early childhood education and social validity. She serves on the editorial review boards of the *Journal of Early Intervention* and *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*.

Mary Louise Hemmeter, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Special Education at Vanderbilt University. She teaches courses, advises students, and conducts research on early childhood issues. She is the cofaculty director of the Susan Gray School for Children, which is an early childhood program for children with and without disabilities. Her research focuses on effective instruction, social and emotional development and challenging behavior, translating research to practice, and effective approaches to professional development.

Currently, she directs an Institute of Education Sciences-funded research project focused on the efficacy

of implementing the Teaching Pyramid in classrooms, and she works on the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning and the Office of Special Education Programs's funded Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Interventions. She is a coeditor of the *Journal of Early Intervention* and serves on the editorial boards of other major journals in early childhood special education. She served as President of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and received the Merle B. Karnes award from DEC.

Hsin-Ying Chou, Ed.D., served as Research Assistant for the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion (ECRII) at the University of Washington. She has worked with young children with special needs in Taiwan and the United States. Her professional interests include parent-professional relationships and decision making. She received her doctorate in education from the University of Washington in 2001.

Dr. Horn is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Kansas. Dr. Horn focuses on the development of effective instructional approaches for infants and young children with developmental delays and disabilities. Her research examines how these effective strategies can be implemented within the context of ongoing routines and activities in inclusive environments. Dr. Horn is the editor of the journal *Young Exceptional Children*.

Gail E. Joseph, Ph.D., Mental Health Specialist at the Head Start Bureau in Washington, DC. She completed her doctorate at the University of Washington and was Head Teacher in an inclusive Head Start classroom in the Experimental Education Unit. Dr. Joseph's research and practice focus on the social and emotional development of young, high-risk children and mental health interventions for children and families. She is co-author of the DEC Recommended Practices Program Assessment (with Mary Louise Hemmeter, Barbara J. Smith, and Susan R. Sandall, Sopris West, 2001).

Joan Lieber, Ph.D., is Professor of Special Education in the College of Education at the University of Maryland. Her research interests include inclusion and teachers' beliefs and practices. She has 8 years of public school teaching experience. Dr. Lieber co-directs an early childhood special education model demonstration project that includes young children with disabilities in community-based programs.

Samuel L. Odom is Director of the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute and Professor of Education at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to his work at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dr. Odom previously served in faculty positions at Indiana University and Peabody College/Vanderbilt University. Dr. Odom received a master's degree in special education in 1976 and an educational specialist degree in educational psychology from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1979. He earned his doctorate in 1982 in education and human development from the University of Washington.

Throughout his career, Dr. Odom has held positions as a preschool teacher, student teaching supervisor, program coordinator, teacher educator, and researcher. He has written many articles and chapters about programs for young children and their families and has served as the co-editor of five books on early childhood special education. Dr. Odom is an associate editor for *Exceptional Children* and is on the editorial board of *Journal of Early Intervention*, *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, and *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. He received the Special Education

Outstanding Research Award from the American Educational Research Association Special Education Special Interest Group in 1999, the Merle Karnes Contribution to the Field Award from the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in 2001, and the Outstanding Special Education Research Award from CEC in 2007.

Dr. Odom's research interests include interventions and teaching approaches that promote social competence of young children, effective intervention approaches for children with autism, and early childhood curricula that promote children's school success.

Ruth Wolery, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of the Practice of Special Education at Peabody College and Director of the Susan Gray School for Children. Prior to joining the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion (ECRII) team, she spent years working in the public school system. Her current teaching and research interests focus on delivering high-quality services to young children with disabilities in inclusive preschool programs.

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Excerpted from Chapter 6 of *Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs, Second Edition*, by Susan R. Sandall, Ph.D., & Ilene S. Schwartz, Ph.D.

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When early childhood teachers plan their activities for the day for their whole class, they can add an extra layer of planning to simultaneously meet the learning objectives of their students with special needs. Embedded learning opportunities (ELOs) are short teaching episodes that teachers set up for when there is a good match between classroom activities and a child's individual learning objectives.

Classroom activities are planned to help all children learn valued concepts and skills. Teachers then create teaching episodes designed to ensure children with individual objectives engage more fully in the activities. With the use of the ELOs, it is presumed that the teacher and team are already using a high-quality curriculum and appropriate standards to guide their planning.

Using ELOs has a number of benefits:

1. Since ongoing activities and routines are used, big changes to the classroom are not required.
2. Choosing activities that match a child's interests and preferences enhances the child's motivation to participate and learn.
3. Because the teaching takes place in the natural setting of the classroom, the child is more likely to use the newly learned skill by him- or herself in familiar environments.
4. When the teacher provides ELOs several times during the day and during different activities, the child's ability to use the skill in a variety of situations is increased.

The Basic Steps

Using ELOs sounds like a natural thing to do. However, teachers must plan very carefully to ensure that during the teaching episodes, children with special needs are able to adequately practice their skills. Seven basic steps are necessary for planning and implementing ELOs:

1. Clarify the learning objective and determine the criterion.
2. Gather baseline information to determine the child's current level of performance.
3. Use an activity matrix to select activities, learning centers, or classroom routines in which instruction can reasonably be embedded.
4. Design the instructional interaction, and write it on a planning form. You can use an ELO-at-a-Glance (see a sample in the free download above), which tells exactly what will happen during a teaching episode (adapted from McCormick & Feeney's "IEP-at-a-Glance" [1995]).
5. Implement the instruction as planned, remembering these tips:
 - Give clear instructions.
 - Let the child respond.
 - Provide feedback.
6. Keep track of the opportunities provided.

7. Periodically check to find out if the child has achieved the objective. *Adapted from Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs, Second Edition by Susan R. Sandall & Ilene S.*

Example: How to help Samisha increase her cooperative play skills*One of Samisha's learning objectives focused on increasing her cooperative play skills with peers. One of the ways Samisha's teachers decided to work on this was to embed planned teaching and learning opportunities in the classroom's free-choice time. The classroom features a learning center where the children can play with board games, such as Lotto. During free-choice time, Gia and David planned to invite Samisha to the game table when other children who were more skilled players would be there. David then used prompts and encouragement to help Samisha learn the game and play cooperatively with her peers.*

In this example, instead of setting up a special or separate time for Samisha to learn and practice cooperative play skills, her teachers did some extra planning so that they could embed the necessary instruction (in this case, using systematic prompting and encouragement) within the ongoing free-choice activities. More specifically:*Samisha's learning objective states that during play times, Samisha will join her peers in play and maintain play with them for 10 minutes or more in cooperative play activities. She will demonstrate this in four different play areas. Samisha's teachers completed the Child Assessment Worksheet, examined their daily schedule, and observed and took notes on Samisha's play during free-choice time. They noted that Samisha can take part in cooperative play in the dramatic play area but only if she initiates the story line. Even then, her cooperative play lasts only a couple of minutes. Gia and David also noted that Samisha has started to watch other children play games in the table game center. One of the important considerations for Samisha's teachers is that there are six children with disabilities in the classroom, and many of the children have objectives that could be embedded during free-choice time. Gia and David need to be creative and realistic about how to use their time and resources. They decided to embed instruction on cooperative play at the table game center. Once Samisha is successful, they will work on this objective in other play areas. The current plan means that one adult will work with three or four children. The structure of the game and systematic use of prompting will help Samisha learn to play with the other children. The teachers developed an ELO-at-a-Glance for Samisha. To maximize their time and resources, Gia and David could decide to use this same activity during free-choice time to embed instruction for another child in the class. Joey is one of Samisha's classmates. He also likes to play at the game table. This could be a prime time for the teacher (who is already there) to embed instruction on one of Joey's objectives: Joey will release a handheld object onto or into a larger target with either hand. The teachers select the game's playing pieces with Joey in mind and then use the slight minimal assistance he needs to help him place the playing piece on the appropriate section of the board game.*

See Samisha's sample Child Assessment Worksheet and ELO-at-a-Glance in the free download above.

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