

The Foundation: Theory and Research

Until the 20th century, scientific researchers gave little attention to children's development and learning. In the past 75 years, however, research has generated new information about childhood as a separate and distinct stage of life. Developmentally appropriate practice is the application of this knowledge to teaching. *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos* shows you how to implement developmentally appropriate practice in your program for young children.

Developmentally appropriate practice means teaching in ways that match the way children develop and learn. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, quality care requires that early childhood professionals make decisions about the care and education of children based upon information in three areas:¹

- knowledge of child development and how children learn
- knowledge of the individual needs, strengths, and interests of each child
- knowledge of the social and cultural context in which each child lives

This chapter summarizes some of the major theories behind developmentally appropriate practice and *The Creative Curriculum*. Each of the theories or research described has influenced the design of *The Creative Curriculum* and its view of how children develop and learn. The chapter also explains how *The Creative Curriculum* helps you put theory and research into practice in your program. It will help you decide what to do when, for example, an infant cries for the first several days in your care. It will help you understand such things as why a mobile infant pushes her toys one by one off the table, watching them fall. You will know what to do when a toddler shouts, "No!" when you ask him to do something. Understanding early childhood theory and research is essential to knowing what children think and feel and how you can help them become caring people and joyful learners.

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