

# Introduction

**I**n the world of early childhood, there has been an increase in the pressure to teach the traditional three Rs: Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic. What was once the curriculum for first grade has become the standard for kindergarten classrooms, and what was once a kindergarten lesson is expected at the preschool level. Parents feel they should expect more, and research shows kids are capable of more, so standards get tighter, and the pressure is on for early childhood teachers and parents to deliver. The unfortunate result of this has been early childhood programs and parents that focus on getting the academic results but leave behind the basics for all learning. It is no surprise, then, that many programs are struggling and that children in higher grades are being found to have additional problems with social interactions and little or no problem-solving techniques. The missing link? Teaching the three Cs. Instilling in children a love for learning, a process for making decisions, and the ability to solve problems while working with others begins by encouraging their creativity, curiosity, and courtesy.

The days for simple play and exploration in childhood seem to be gone. But in order for the new programs of advanced learning and the parents of these children to be effective in any way, children must be allowed the opportunity to build a basis for all learning, to get excited about what the possibilities are and what their part in it will be.

Teaching creativity to children is not only fun for the children, teachers, and parents, it opens doors to other learning. By letting children explore new possibilities with materials, activities, and discussions, they can become masters of their own learning. Children have a natural curiosity, but all too often it is quieted by a predisposed lesson plan or a busy personal schedule. Teachers and parents who follow a child's natural curiosity and provide them the avenues to obtain the information they crave will find that more learning takes place in those moments than in a week's worth of planned activities. As children interact with each other and adults, modeling and requiring a standard of courtesy creates a sense of respect among all. Children who show respect and feel it from others will have strong self-esteem and build successful relationships with peers and adults.

## 2 • Teaching the Three Cs: Creativity, Curiosity, and Courtesy

Part 1 of this book will address creativity. It's not so much a matter of "teaching" creativity as it is allowing for creative moments to happen and expanding on them when they do. We'll discuss what makes a creative person and what attributes we can enhance to bring out the creativeness in all children. Then you'll be provided with activities that help to foster creativity in children. Next, there will be activities that can integrate creativity into the standards set by many states for early childhood assessment. These will help ensure a teacher's ability to meet these standards but also create a basis for this learning by integrating creativity into the activities.

Part 2 focuses on curiosity. We'll discuss the importance of curiosity and how it supports further learning. We'll explore the connection between curiosity and creativity, the natural abilities of children to be curious, and the dangers in containing this curiosity. You'll be provided with activities that foster creativity and also those that integrate it into the developmental standards.

Finally, we'll explore courtesy. We'll discuss how we as teachers and parents are key in supporting this attribute through our modeling. Manners in general have undergone many changes in our society over the years, so we'll take a look at the character aspects that still stand strong. I'll share activities that promote courtesy in children as well as those that are integrated into further learning.

Activities will be listed under the standards they will meet. The standards categories chosen for the activities are based on the standards list from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). A complete list of the standard areas and underlying categories can be found by searching for "state standards" at <http://nieer.org>. Those using the Creative Curriculum will also find that their "50 Goals and Objectives" fall within these identified standards as well. The standards categories you will find in this book are

- Language and literacy
- Math
- Science
- Social and emotional, which includes social studies
- Cognitive development, including memory, the senses, and problem solving
- Health and physical development
- The arts, including visual art, music, and drama

In addition to the standard areas identified by NIEER, I have included "the arts," an identified content area of the Creative Curriculum. Unfortunately, this content area has not been identified by NIEER, most

likely because it is not found in the state standards used to compile their lists. This further demonstrates the importance of working to add this aspect of creative content to our curriculums, so it will be included in the standards listed for each C.

Currently, every U.S. state and the District of Columbia have adopted some form of early learning standards. These standards drive a teacher's curriculum but do not define it. In *The Curriculum Bridge: From Standards to Actual Classroom Practice*, author Pearl G. Solomon (2003) reports that teachers have control over curriculum. They are influenced by state standards and effects of power and school organization, but ultimately they use these as a base from which to build their own curriculums. "With consistency in the content and performance standards as the objective, teachers can be creative, responsive, and timely with the activities they use to achieve the standards" (p. 90). She points out that "there is often more than one way to solve a problem and more than one way to reach a standard" (p. 89).

The purpose of this book is to help parents, teachers, and child care providers—anyone who works with young children—create a basis for further learning. By learning how to work with children on enhancing their natural abilities to be creative, curious, and courteous, as well as using these abilities to accomplish other developmental goals, we not only give our children a foundation but help them to begin the process of constructing their future.