Preface

An overarching goal of education is to promote the highest possible level of academic development for each child who arrives at the school door. However, academic development alone is insufficient for preparing today's 21st-century citizen. As school professionals become increasingly concerned with the academic performance of students, they are more aware of the need for educating the *whole child*—attending to cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and ethical development. Furthermore, emerging research related to the developing brain and new knowledge about child resilience makes it imperative that school personnel pay close attention to how the school, family, and community environments impact students' healthy development and school achievement.

Educating the whole child requires that teaching and learning embrace all dimensions of student development. Achieving these goals for each student requires collaboration among professionals within the school and in the community. This challenge raises several questions. How do professionals from different disciplines work together and blend their skills and talents to address the developmental needs of students? How do professionals work across the institutional boundaries of schools and community agencies? What attitudes and beliefs about collaboration are needed to work together effectively to create school environments for children who are healthy—socially, emotionally, and developmentally? Who takes responsibility for the collaborative process, and who intervenes when the process breaks down? This book describes the characteristics of effective collaborative teams for educating the whole child and how to create them.

It has long been recognized that schools alone cannot provide all the supports that children and their families need. *Shared responsibility* for a community's children has recently become a watchword for educators and human service personnel. The notion of shared responsibility implies working across school-community agency boundaries to create a well-coordinated service system to meet the holistic (whole-child) needs of students. This book, therefore, is concerned with connecting systems—within schools and between schools and communities—and the extraordinary communication and cooperation it takes to accomplish it.

This book also emphasizes the important transitions in the course of development and progress from elementary years through high school and into the adult world. The transition from one level to another (e.g., kindergarten to first grade, elementary to middle, middle to high school, and high school to higher education or employment) can be an exciting time, but it is daunting for many children and their parents. Recent research indicates that one-third of all children demonstrate mild to serious difficulties with such transitions, which can interfere with learning and development. Well-coordinated and supported transitions can make the difference between success and chronic struggle as children move from one level in the education system to the next. A *developmentally healthy environment* reflects the careful attention of professionals to these transitions.

Finally, this book centers on the role of collaboration and coordination as central to problem solving and change in classrooms, schools, and school-community systems. Collaboration and coordination are essential to change in relationships among people, which leads to change in practices, which ultimately leads to healthy development and academic progress in students. Often both the successes and the difficulties with the collaborative process can be traced to problems in professional and personal relationships. Likewise, the cornerstones of coordinated interagency relationships are the personal relationships of the individuals involved. The quality of these relationships depends on the team skills and beliefs and attitudes of the people involved. The chapters that follow address how professional collaboration and coordination work, who takes responsibility for the process, and how it ultimately can affect student outcomes.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1, What Does It Mean to Educate the Whole Child? introduces the issues and challenges that professionals face in responding to the wide range of developmental needs of children and youth in schools. This chapter presents a picture of the conditions for children and youth today that greatly affect their educational participation, engagement, progress, and ultimate life outcomes—and that warrant a call to action. The chapter explores the challenges of educating children—*both with and without identified disabilities*—who develop at greatly differing rates. It examines the connection between children's environment and learning and defines collaboration as being essential in schools' responses to serving the whole child. The chapters in the balance of this book address *how* collaboration and coordination work for educating the whole child and who takes responsibility for the process.

Chapter 2, What Is a Developmentally Healthy School Environment? defines the characteristics of a healthy school environment, the factors that promote it, and those that undermine it. The chapter discusses the connections between school environment and learning and between social and emotional health and learning, the impacts of key transition points on learning, and the importance of professional collaboration in attending to the range of developmental domains of students. The chapter also explores the special needs of students, both with and without disabilities, who need extra support in the school environment, including those who do not meet criteria for special education. It addresses factors that are associated with school safety and violence prevention, school dropout prevention, and reduction in placement into alternative education settings, and it discusses the role of families.

Chapter 3, What Laws Promote Collaboration for the Whole Child Initiative? traces the history of our concern about the relationship between the school environment and children's development. It outlines the history of perspectives on the role of schools in addressing the needs of the whole child and introduces the emergence of strength-based approaches and the impact of the positive youth development movement. This chapter discusses policy makers' recognition of the importance of school-linked services and interagency collaboration in promoting students' academic success and general developmental progress through schooling. This chapter also provides an overview of the laws that promote developmentally healthy school environments, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, Safe and Drug-Free Schools legislation, and emerging mental health legislation at the state and federal levels.

Chapter 4, How Do Schools Create Developmentally Responsive Environments? discusses the roles, responsibilities, and interconnections among a variety of professionals who collaborate to create developmentally healthy school environments. These professionals include teachers, administrators, counselors, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and other related support service specialists in the school community. Their roles in developing strengths-based developmental approaches through collaboration are explored, with voices of professionals incorporated throughout the chapter.

Chapter 5, How Do Professionals Collaborate to Educate the Whole Child? discusses the essential relationships and skills needed for effective communication, collaboration, and coordination to take place and describes the characteristics of effective collaborative teams. It explores why intraschool collaboration and interagency service coordination have been so difficult to accomplish within the field of education. The chapter introduces models and strategies for collaboration, stages in the development of collaborative teams, barriers to collaboration, and principles and professional standards for collaboration. Examples of professional collaboration are presented.

Chapter 6, What Is the Role of Community Agencies? explores strategies to support developmentally healthy school environments through coordinated services between schools and community agencies. Models for coordination, stages in the development of school-agency relationships, development of interagency agreements, and whole-school approaches to coordination are introduced. Whole-school approaches and interagency coordination are illustrated with case examples.

Chapter 7, How Does Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Affect Professional Collaboration? explores the question of how cultural and linguistic diversity affects professional collaboration among educators and other professionals and how educators can improve collaboration and coordination of services for culturally and linguistically diverse students and families. The chapter introduces principles for professional collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse students and parents, and it discusses barriers to communication and collaboration associated with diversity and presents strategies for overcoming them.

Chapter 8, Celebrating Our Work: The Benefits and Positive Impacts of Professional Collaboration, explores what is working in local schools to create developmentally healthy environments. It discusses the signs of success and describes methods of measuring the impact of collaboration on schools and student achievement. A tool for self-assessment of professional collaboration is presented.

WHAT IS THE AUTHORS' RELEVANT EXPERIENCE?

Throughout our professional lives, we have collaborated with teachers, counselors, school psychologists, speech and language specialists, and related services personnel to promote collaboration in their preparation and in their practice. We have learned three important lessons over the years: (1) across the nation, students preparing to work in schools in the fields of counseling, school psychology, and related professions are not adequately prepared in their training to collaborate with teachers, particularly in regard to students with special learning needs; (2) teachers in training across the nation are not adequately prepared to collaborate with other school professionals; and (3) school personnel and researchers confirm that the need for such collaboration is growing in every school district across the United States. Furthermore,

few professionals are prepared for school settings in which social, emotional, and behavioral disorders are becoming more prevalent.

The book is also based on over 30 years' experience developing, managing, and studying school and community agency coordination, at the local, state, and national levels, for children and youth who are at risk of failing to thrive socially or academically in general education. The material in the book reflects our experiences working with schools, school systems, and states to improve collaboration and coordination among agencies. The chapters have also been shaped by years of research and countless interviews with teachers, school administrators, counselors and school psychologists, speech-language specialists, local and state coordinators, parents, students, and others involved in making collaboration and coordination work.

Finally, Carol Kochhar-Bryant's perspective has been deeply enriched by the experience of being a parent of a young adult who has needed specialized and supportive services from a variety of agencies and professionals through most of his life. He is now navigating the tumultuous passage of transition into young adulthood, gradually gaining ground in his daily struggle to overcome multiple challenges from within. Together over the years, he and his mother have negotiated services from five different agencies to provide the combination of supports he has needed. Together, they have learned just how important the parent is in the collaboration and coordination process, and just how unpredictable the journey.

FOR WHOM WAS THIS BOOK WRITTEN?

This book is designed for a variety of professionals who want to improve school collaboration and the coordination of services to address the needs of the whole child. The book is useful for any professional concerned with children—*both with and without identified disabilities*—who receive services that require professional collaboration within the school or among schools and community agencies. The material is appropriate for those preparing for professional roles in a variety of education and human services fields, including as general educators, special educators, administrators, school counselors, psychologists, speech-language therapists, parents and parent advocates, guidance counselors, school counselors and mental health workers, and professional development coordinators.