

# Intentional Practice with Infants and Toddlers

PEDAGOGIES FOR LEARNING,  
DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

Children in their first three years of life learn, develop and grow at a faster rate than at any other time, with early childhood teachers and educators playing a vital role in providing them with the very best learning opportunities. *Intentional Practice with Infants and Toddlers* focusses on purposeful pedagogical approaches, equipping pre-service and practising early childhood teachers and educators with the professional knowledge and strategies required to implement effective infant and toddler pedagogies in early childhood education settings.

Drawing on a growing body of research and evidence, this book covers topics such as educational programs, pedagogy as care, health and physical wellbeing, creating a language-rich environment, establishing social cultures, and documenting, planning for and communicating learning. Features include spotlight boxes to explore relevant research, theories and practices; vignettes to open each chapter; reflection questions; and links to the Early Years Learning Framework, National Quality Standard and the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.

Authored by leading experts in infant–toddler pedagogies, *Intentional Practice with Infants and Toddlers* is an indispensable resource for all pre-service and practising early childhood teachers and educators.

**Sheila Degotardi** is Professor of Early Childhood Education in the School of Education, Macquarie University, Sydney.

**Andi Salamon** is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

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## PREFACE

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*Intentional Practice with Infants and Toddlers* was written with the aim of making visible the sophisticated and diverse ways that children aged from birth to two years learn in early childhood education services. Implicated in this learning are the capabilities that very young children bring to their learning experiences. Also implicated are the skills that educators use to harness these capabilities in order to support children's learning, development and wellbeing.

In today's society, it is no longer acceptable to regard infant–toddler education as a low-skilled profession. The work is complex, requiring those who work with our youngest children to build a professional knowledge base to inform their work. For this reason, throughout this book we draw on the wisdom of those who are researching, working and learning in infant–toddler early childhood contexts. We acknowledge the contribution of researchers, past and present, whose work provokes critical reflection and provides evidence from which a professional knowledge base can be formed. We also draw on the wisdom of practising educators, who, through their own intentional practice, provide invaluable evidence of pedagogies that work with specific children in specific contexts. Finally, we honour the contributions of the infants and toddlers themselves, who, by allowing us to observe and participate in their experiences, teach us more about themselves than can ever be learnt through reading alone.

With this in mind, we acknowledge the contribution of three early childhood services and their families who graciously allowed us to record the footage that was used to produce the images and narratives contained throughout the book. To the educators, families and children at Hampshire House Early Learning School, Euroka Children's Centre and Mia Mia Child and Family Study Centre, we express our heartfelt thanks for allowing us to enter your services and capture such rich and inspiring moments of living and learning.

No work can ever be completed in the absence of support provided by others. We also thank our own families, friends and colleagues who have encouraged us to keep writing, even when things got tough, and who celebrate with us the publication of this book. Last, but by no means least, we greatly appreciate the support of staff at Cambridge University Press who understood what we wanted to achieve through this book and worked with us constantly to make it a reality.

To you all, we say thank you.

Sheila, Andi and Tina



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Sheila Degotardi** is Professor of Early Childhood Education in the School of Education, Macquarie University, Sydney. Sheila specialises in the nature and importance of infant–toddler pedagogies and learning in early childhood education centres. Drawing on over 30 years’ experience as an early childhood teacher and researcher, she is strongly committed to supporting early childhood services, teachers and educators to provide rich learning opportunities for our youngest children. With a deep interest in relationship-based pedagogies, Sheila investigates the nature of social interactions between children, their educators and peers to consider how these interactions contribute towards very young children’s learning. Central to this is a deep appreciation of how the social, communicative and cognitive capabilities of very young children and their educators collectively shape the learning experiences that take place in infant–toddler settings.

**Andi Salamon** is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. Andi draws on decades of interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education professional experience as a practitioner and leader in her current work. Taking a respectful, reciprocal and participatory approach, Andi is keenly interested in sophisticated infant cognitive, social and emotional development and how these come together in holistic communicative practices. A passionate advocate for the reality of young children’s lives as the starting point for transformational early childhood pedagogy, Andi incorporates her research into her current teaching to uphold infants’ rights to quality early learning experiences. She keeps children and families at the front of her mind in her work and encourages pre-service teachers, colleagues and early years leaders to do the same.

**Tina Stratigos** is Senior Lecturer in the Sydney School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. Drawing on her experience as an early childhood teacher and researcher, Tina is committed to supporting future teachers to become confident and knowledgeable practitioners, leaders and advocates for pedagogy that supports very young children to flourish. Central to this is an interest in the role of professional experience placements in initial teacher education and how pre-service teachers can be supported to make connections between theory and practice in early childhood settings. Tina’s teaching and research is also influenced by questions about the impact of digital documentation technologies on how educators plan, implement and communicate curriculum while building meaningful partnerships with families.

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