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# From the Editor

In 2005, Thomas Friedman published *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* to document a new global perspective that was emerging across all sectors of society. Among the reasons he cited for this perspective was the role of technology in facilitating rapid communication and information exchange to all world citizens. Many innovations that would have slowly filtered from one country to another through traditional channels of dissemination can now be implemented across the world simultaneously. This has not only improved the process of innovation to implementation, but has created a perceptual shift in thinking about the relevance and role of geographical boundaries to world advancement. We can think of no better perspective with which to introduce this special issue of *Infants & Young Children (IYC)*, as its focus is on the international advancement of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) through the implementation of the Developmental Systems Approach (DSA; Guralnick, 2001).

## DEVELOPMENTAL SYSTEMS APPROACH

The DSA was created to provide a framework to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of early intervention services and supports for vulnerable children and their families. Central to the DSA is an understanding of the mechanisms associated with family influences on children's social and cognitive competence as identified in the developmental science of normative development. Also critical is an awareness of the complex array of risk and protective factors associated with vulnerable children and their families, assessed at the level of a child's development (social and cognitive competence), at the level of specific family patterns of interaction that influence children's competence, and at the level of personal and material resources available to families. Once this assessment process is accomplished, a comprehensive, coherent, and

conceptually well-grounded plan utilizing current intervention science can be constructed (Guralnick, 2011, 2012).

The translation of this developmental framework into a community-based system of services and supports for vulnerable children and their families requires consideration of an additional set of principles and values relevant to early intervention. Fortunately, an international consensus has emerged with respect to these principles and values addressing issues related to inclusion, cultural competence, and evaluation, among others (Guralnick, 2008). Figure 1 (modified from Guralnick, 2001) represents a systems approach based on the DSA that can be utilized by communities and that integrates the larger developmental framework and the consensus principles and values. By explicitly identifying the components of a system and how these components are related to one another, communities can communicate more clearly about the status of their early intervention system of services and supports and more efficiently plan and implement improvements. This special international issue of *IYC* takes this innovative systems effort to an entirely new level by examining the implementation of early intervention through the lens of DSA in various countries.

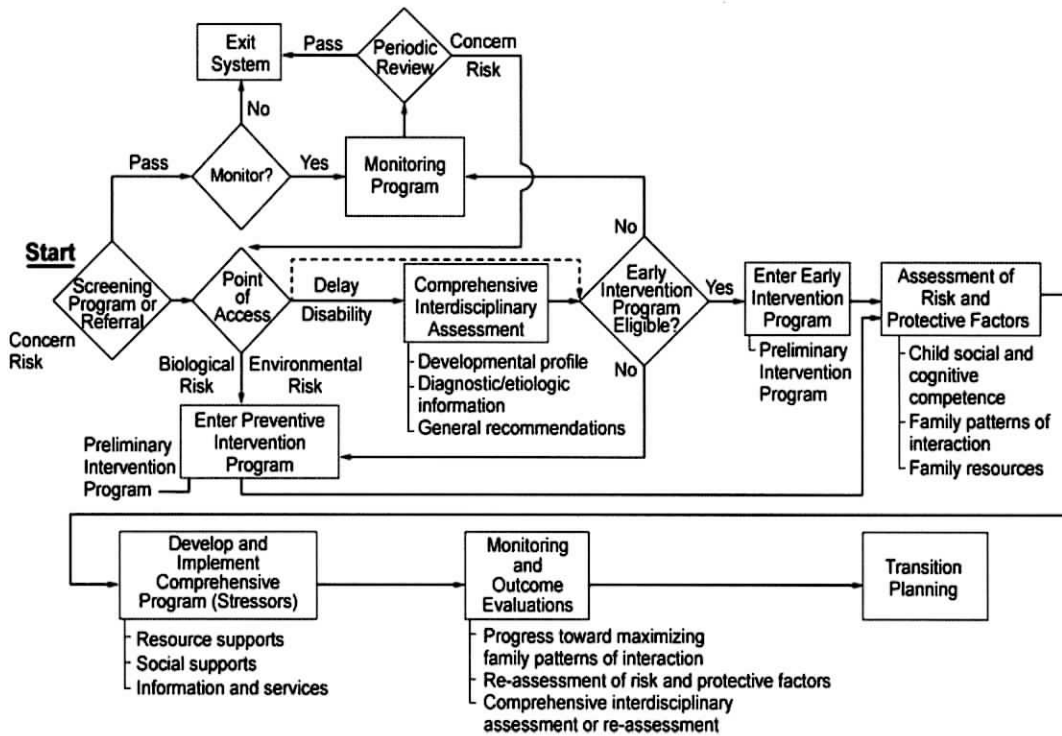
## CURRENT ISSUE

Last winter, *IYC* in collaboration with the International Society on Early Intervention (ISEI), sent out a call for papers for a special international issue of *IYC*. We asked for manuscript submissions representing individual country's perspectives on ECI using the DSA (Guralnick, 2001). We were delighted when we received 35 inquiries from across the world about submitting to this issue. We narrowed the field by asking for abstract submissions from prospective author(s) representing 19 countries. At the submission time, we specified the following requirements: each country could only have one submission; the author(s) had to be currently working in the country in ECI; and the author(s) had to use the DSA to structure his or her description of ECI in his or her country. After the

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*The authors declare no conflict of interest.*

DOI: 10.1097/IYC.0b013e31826d8242



**Figure 1.** The Developmental Systems Approach for early intervention. Modified from "A Developmental Systems Model for Early Intervention," by M. J. Guralnick, 2001, *Infants & Young Children*, 14(2), pp. 1-18. Copyright 2001 by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

abstracts were reviewed, authors from 13 countries were invited to send a manuscript for this special issue. We are so pleased that we have accepted 9 as articles from around the world, and six appear in this issue (Canada, Israel, Portugal, Singapore, Turkey, and South Africa).

Our first article by Sharan Brown and Michael Guralnick introduces this special issue by providing a global perspective on international human rights and advocacy for ECI. The authors provide a thorough review of the UN Convention (e.g., treaty) on the Rights of the Child and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Information about this latter Convention is extremely timely, as it has been debated in the U.S. Senate this summer. The CRPD was originally adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 13, 2006, and thus far, 115 countries have ratified it. The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect, and ensure the

full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity and . . . participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The United States signed the CRPD in 2009, on the 19th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). On July 26, 2012, the 22nd anniversary of the ADA, the CRPD was voted favorably out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and sent forward for full Senate ratification. The ADA guarantees each individual with disabilities in the United States equal access and equal opportunity under law. The CRPD will protect the rights of American citizens with disabilities when they live, work, or travel outside of the United States. There is bipartisan support for the passage of this convention, and by this fall, the Senate should start this process of ratification through a full vote for passage. As Senator Reid,

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Senate majority leader, stated prior to the Congressional summer recess:

This Convention is another step towards ensuring that all people with a disability, in any country, are treated with dignity and given the right to achieve to their full potential . . . Just like passing the Americans with Disabilities Act, ratifying this Convention is, quite simply, the right thing to do.

It is fitting that this issue is dedicated to promoting the rights of all the world's vulnerable children to a full and productive life. Sharan and Michael's article provides a rich foundation from which to begin.

As stated, the remainder of our issue is dedicated to the application of the DSA in the ECI systems in countries across the world. The articles share many commonalities, which to us are indicative of how far the field has come. Yet, all systems (including the United States) are still struggling with implementation challenges. Though some of the challenges derive from cultural expectations and beliefs, others are universal. These include a lack of funding and appropriately trained personnel. As we go forward in a new era of systemic world reforms, we are hopeful that ECI systems will continue to increase

in quantity. Beyond quantity, we also hope that the DSA can provide a guide to sustainable quality.

In this issue, we thank the following authors for contributing to this issue: Kathryn Underwood and Elaine B. Frankel from Canada; Cory Shulman, Hedda Meadan, and Yoram Sandhaus from Israel; Ana Isabel Pinto, Catarina Grande, Cecília Aguiar, Isabel Chaves de Almeida, Isabel Felgueiras, Júlia Serpa Pimentel, Ana Maria Serrano, Leonor Carvalho, Maria Teresa Brandão, Tânia Boavida, Paula Santos, and Pedro Lopes-dos-Santos from Portugal; Kenneth K. Poon and Ai-Keow Lim from Singapore; Alecia Eloise Samuels, Wiedaad Slemming, and Sadna Balton from South Africa; and Ibrahim H. Diken, Pinar Bayhan, Figen Turan, R. Firat Sipal, Bulbin Sucuoğlu, Hatice Ceber-Bakkaloğlu, Mintaze Kerem Gunel, and Ozgun Kaya Kara from Turkey. We are humbled and grateful for the hard work they are doing on behalf of infants, young children, and families across the world.

—**Mary Beth Bruder, PhD**  
Editor

—**Michael J. Guralnick, PhD**  
Chair  
*International Society on  
Early Intervention*

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