

Gwendolyn Cartledge

by Natasha Williams

Gwendolyn Cartledge is most noted for her work on teaching social skills to children with and without disabilities. More recently, she has given more attention in her research and writing to urban learners, focusing on early interventions for both reading and social behaviors. Currently she is a Professor in the [School of Physical Activity and Educational Services](#) at the [Ohio State University](#) (Cartledge, 2009). Her primary responsibilities include teacher education for students with mild disabilities on. Her research and writings are recognized and cited nationally in teacher preparation programs. She has written several books and published countless articles related to the above noted topics.

Background Information

Cartledge received her B.S. in elementary education and a M.Ed. in special education from the [University of Pittsburgh](#) in 1965 and 1973 respectively. She continued on to earn a Ph.D. in Special Education/Curriculum and Supervision from The Ohio State University in 1975 (Cartledge, 2009).

Early Work

Cartledge began her work as a teacher in the [West Mifflin School District](#) in West Mifflin, PA. She taught students with learning and behavior disorders in the [Pittsburgh Public Schools](#) and then moved into a supervisory position while employed with the Pittsburgh school system. Cartledge tells the story of a conversation from early in her career as a special education teacher with the mother of a child fighting for her son to receive special education services. “She (the student’s mother) stated that we had failed to teach her son critical social skills...that conversation has continued to resonate with me, and three decades later I am increasingly convinced of the truth of her words” (Cartledge, 2005, p. 179). During her doctoral studies, she studied strategies for teaching social skills and was mentored in this area by Dr. Thomas Stephens. Upon receiving her Ph.D., she accepted the job as faculty member at [Cleveland State University](#). During her time at Cleveland State, Cartledge taught classes on teaching students with mild disabilities and consulted with various agencies on developing curriculum, classroom management and teaching social skills (Cartledge, 2009). She published her first book on teaching social skills while at Cleveland State, helping to launch her extensive career on teaching social skills.

A Fresh Start

Cartledge, along with her colleague James Kleefeld, have published curricula centered on developing social skills in children with learning and behavior disabilities. *Working Together: Building Children's Social Skills through Folk Literature* (1994; in press) incorporates the use of folktales as a primary teaching method. The folktales given are stories from a wide variety of cultures that promote healthy social development. Some of the social skills targeted in the curriculum include skills such as "speaking assertively", "accepting individual differences," "giving and accepting criticism", "respecting others' property," "helping others participate," and "controlling temper" (Cartledge & Kleefeld, 1994; in press). The target age for this particular curriculum is Grades 3-6.

Taking Part: Introducing Social Skills to Children (Cartledge & Kleefeld, 1991; 2009) uses interactive lessons to teach younger children from preschool to Grade 3 prosocial behaviors in a more concrete, simplified way. The original curriculums published by American Guidance Company included a teaching manual, audiotapes, posters, puppets, stickers, and other fun and exciting teaching tools; however, the revised curriculum published by Research Press gives many of these items as blackline masters.

Later Work

Cartledge's focus on the development of social skills in children with learning and behavior disabilities has shifted its focus to inner city schools. Her latest book, co-written by Ralph Garner III, and Donna Y. Ford, *Diverse Learners with Exceptionalities: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom* focuses on classroom and behavior management strategies and successful intervention for culturally and racially diverse children with special educational needs (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2009). The thing that distinguishes Cartledge's work from others is that it is practical. Her work is not only grounded in research and theories, but also offers scenarios and materials to challenge educators to apply the knowledge they have acquired to real life situations. Cartledge has already made considerable contributions to the field but has new areas of research she would like to pursue. "Perhaps the one thing that I would like to accomplish in my professional career is to develop an early intervention system related to reading fluency that would be effective in minimizing special education referrals. I am especially interested in issues of disproportionality. Somewhat related to that is the application of effective behavioral interventions to prevent disciplinary and behavior referrals" (G. Cartledge, personal communication, October 26, 2009). Cartledge hopes that her students will carry on whatever work is left unfinished at the end of her career (personal communication, October 26, 2009).

Awards

Gwendolyn Cartledge has received several awards for her contributions to the field of special education. Cartledge has been recognized for outstanding accomplishments throughout her tenure as faculty at The Ohio State University, with her latest award coming in 2006 as The Educator of the Year Award from the [Ohio State Council for Exceptional Children](#) (Cartledge, 2009). She presented The Ohio State University Distinguished Teaching Award in 2003 (Cartledge, 2009).

Publications

Cartledge has published 4 books to date: *Diverse learners with exceptionalities: Culturally responsive Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom* (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2009), *Teaching urban learners: Culturally responsive strategies for developing academic and behavioral competence* (Cartledge, G., & Lo, Y., 2006), *Cultural diversity and social skill instruction: Understanding ethnic and gender differences* (Cartledge, G., & Milburn, J.F., 1996), and *Teaching social skills to children and youth: Innovative approaches* (3rd Ed.) (Cartledge, G., & Milburn, J.F., 1995). Cartledge and has contributed chapters in more than 11 comprehensive textbooks and handbooks related to her field of interest.

Cartledge has published countless articles in a number of scholarly journals. She published her first article, *The case for teaching social skills in the classroom* in 1978 with colleague Joanne F. Milburn. Some of her later works include, *Practical behavior management techniques to close the accessibility gap for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse* (Cartledge, G., Singh, A., & Gibson, L., 2008), *Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at risk for disabilities* (Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L., 2008), and *Early intervention in the urban classroom: Using culturally responsive practices* (Musti-Rao, S., & Cartledge, G., 2007).

However, her work does not stop there. Cartledge has done various speaking engagements and has given presentations around the world. Still today, Cartledge continues to be involved in researching ways to improve early intervention and effective prosocial behaviors for children with learning and behavior disabilities.

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