



Early Start Denver Model for Young Children with Autism: Promoting Language, Learning, and Engagement

By Sally J. Rogers PhD, Geraldine Dawson PhD

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From leading authorities, this state-of-the-art manual presents the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), the first comprehensive, empirically tested intervention specifically designed for toddlers and preschoolers with autism spectrum disorder. Supported by the principles of developmental psychology and applied behavior analysis, ESDM's intensive teaching interventions are delivered within play-based, relationship-focused routines. The manual provides structured, hands-on strategies for working with very young children in individual and group settings to promote development in such key domains as imitation; communication; social, cognitive, and motor skills; adaptive behavior; and play.

Implementing individualized treatment plans for each child requires the use of an assessment tool, the *Early Start Denver Model Curriculum Checklist for Young Children with Autism*. A nonreproducible checklist is included in the manual for reference, along with instructions for use; 8½" x 11" checklists are sold separately in sets of 15 ready-to-use booklets.

See also the authors' related parent guide, *An Early Start for Your Child with Autism*.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book marks a very significant milestone in the development of appropriate interventions for young children with autism spectrum disorders. The integration of goals and teaching strategies from developmental, behavioral, and context-oriented approaches is unique. The chapters on theory will press even experienced interventionists to think about what they are attempting and why, and the detailed descriptions of activities show exactly how theory meets practice. With multisite research underway to test the encouraging results of early studies, this manual will enable interventionists to think more broadly; choose concrete, measurable, and useful goals for each child; and collaborate across disciplines within a comprehensive intervention framework."--Catherine Lord, PhD, ABPP, Director, University of Michigan Autism and Communication Disorders Center

"A huge achievement. This book will be indispensable to clinicians, educators, and others who care for young children with autism. Two distinguished scientist-practitioners have teamed up to present an innovative, evidence-based, comprehensive intervention that integrates developmental principles with applied behavior-analytic teaching approaches. Written in a clear and engaging style with many helpful case examples, the book takes readers step by step through all aspects of the intervention--its conceptual framework, initial evaluation of the child with autism, collaboration with the child's family, curriculum design, teaching methods, and systems for monitoring progress."--Tristram Smith, PhD, Division of Neurodevelopmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, University of Rochester Medical Center

"Rogers and Dawson have met an important need for early intervention service providers with this stunningly comprehensive manual. The great strength of the manual is its blend of scientific and practical knowledge that focuses on producing important developmental outcomes for children. It presents an assessment process and instrument (the *Early Start Denver Model Curriculum Checklist*) that pinpoint important developmental goals, as well as detailed information about practices and fidelity that will be of great benefit to service providers who want to implement the model. The *Early Start Denver Model for Young Children with Autism* is one of the best examples of translating science into practice; it will serve as the standard against which future treatment manuals in the field are judged."--Samuel L. Odom, PhD, Director, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"Among the crowd of treatments, interventions, and purported cures that proliferate around autism spectrum disorders, the Denver Model has long stood as a beacon of empirical rigor and developmental sensitivity....Sally Rogers and Geri Dawson, two of the most experienced and accomplished psychologists working in autism today, have laid out the details of a modification of their program designed for toddlers and very young children....By conducting a carefully designed study before publishing their program, they have established an empirical basis for it that provides a high level of added value. Parents and educators who use the program have not just its authors' endorsement, but a scientific basis for validity. The book is written in an engaging and accessible way. One of its best features is its excellent first chapter, which explains in lay terms what is known about brain development and ASD....This book adds greatly to the growing literature on evidence-based naturalistic behavioral treatments for children with ASD. Its attention

to the needs of children under three, now frequently diagnosed with the syndrome, as well as its comprehensive scope and reader-friendly style should guarantee it a well-deserved place on the bookshelves of all who are engaged in the difficult task of optimizing the developmental trajectory of young children with this syndrome."

(*Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 2009-12-11)

"Sets an extremely high standard against which future manuals will be judged. Even for those not intending to replicate the programme in its entirety, the strategies for enhancing play, imitation and communication, and for improving parent/child interaction are potentially extremely helpful for parents and teachers, and for professionals advising them."

(*Child and Adolescent Mental Health Journal* 2009-12-11)

About the Author

Sally J. Rogers, PhD, is Professor of Psychiatry at the MIND Institute, University of California, Davis. A developmental psychologist, she is involved at the international level in major clinical and research activities on autism, including one of the 10 Autism Centers of Excellence network projects funded by the National Institutes of Health/ National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, involving a multisite, randomized, controlled trial of an infant–toddler treatment for autism. She is also the director of an interdisciplinary postdoctoral training grant for autism researchers. Dr. Rogers is on the executive board of the International Society for Autism Research, is an editor of the journal *Autism Research*, and is a member of the DSM-V workgroup on autism, pervasive developmental disorder, and other developmental disorders. She has spent her entire career studying cognitive and social-communicative development and intervention in young children with disabilities and has published widely on clinical and developmental aspects of autism, with a particular interest in imitation problems. As a clinician, she provides evaluation, treatment, and consultation to children and adults with autism and their families.

Geraldine Dawson, PhD, is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Medicine at Duke University and founding Director of the Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development. A clinical psychologist and award-winning researcher, Dr. Dawson has published more than 200 articles and chapters and 9 books on early detection and treatment of autism and brain development. With Sally J. Rogers, she developed the Early Start Denver Model, the first empirically validated comprehensive intervention for toddlers with autism. She served as the first Chief Science Officer for Autism Speaks, the largest autism science and advocacy organization. Before joining the Duke faculty, Dr. Dawson served as Research Professor of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and, prior to that, as Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington and Founding Director of the University of Washington Autism Center. A Fellow of the American Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association, Dr. Dawson is a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Psychological Science and awards for Valuable Service and Research Contributions from the Autism Society of America. Her books include the coauthored *Early Start Denver Model for Young Children with Autism*, *An Early Start for Your Child with Autism* and *A Parent's Guide to Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism*.

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