

Building Collective Responsibility for Every Child

Inclusion in practice

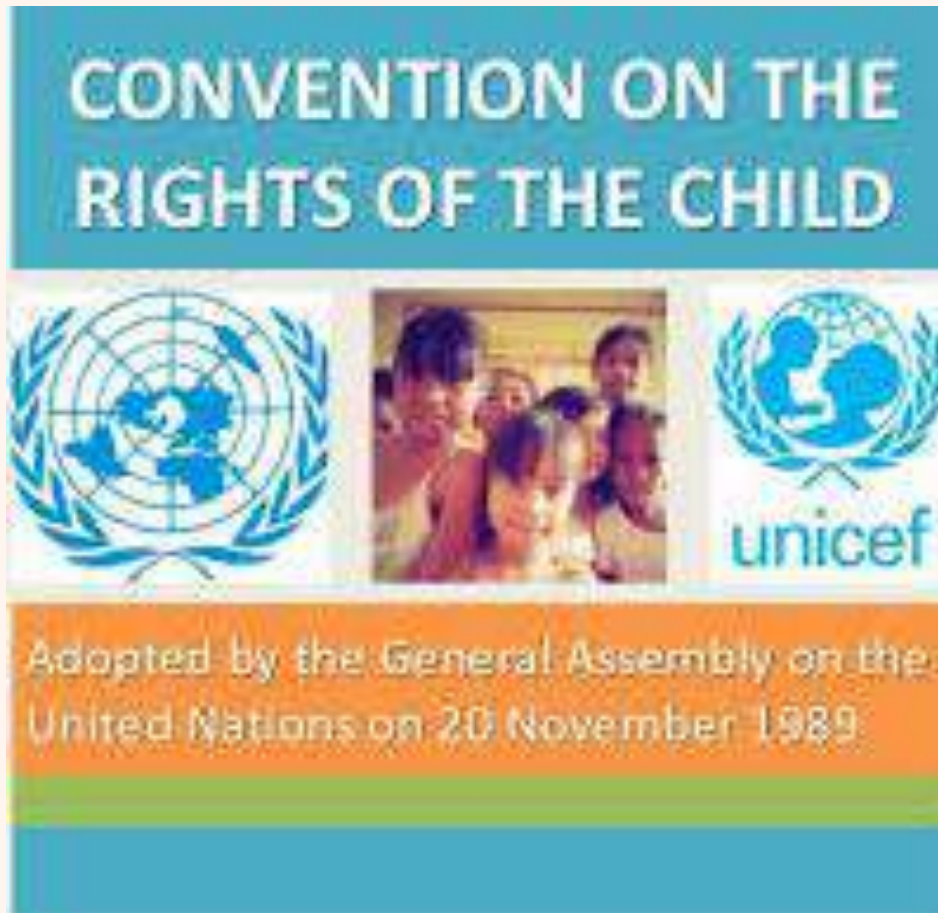
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Welcome



Inclusion is a Right



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) - **All children have the same rights..... no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis. (Article 2)**

Inclusion is a human right. It's also everybody's responsibility.

Inclusion is.....



Children of all abilities and backgrounds living, learning, and playing together

Valuing each child's individual strengths and needs

Supporting children's independence and meaningful participation in programs

Inclusion isn't....

Just breathing the same air as everyone else!

Inclusion is NOT simply co-location!



Not just attending

Simply attending a centre does not ensure inclusion. Inclusion happens when all children are seen as capable learners and valued contributors.

Inclusion is not about changing a child so that they fit into the care environment. It is about changing what we do so that all children can participate.



Photo Unsplash, credit Aaron Burden

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

What is the rationale for inclusion?

Image credit Unsplash: Paul Smith



Why are we thinking about inclusive practice?

What is the intended outcome of inclusive practice?

Write in the chat, why are we discussing this? What is the purpose of creating a high-quality inclusive environment?

WHAT are the 4 key features of the Inclusive Support Programme (InSP)?



CHILD

Supporting children's early intervention needs within the preschool

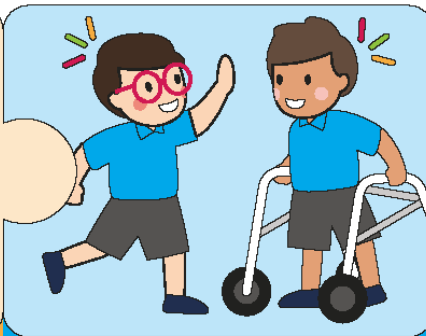
- Specialist support from early intervention and allied health professionals
- Intervention hours ranging from 5 to 12 hours weekly
- Individual Education Plan for children under the InSP



CLASS

Cultivating inclusive practices in the classroom

- Differentiated teaching for the same curriculum
- Early childhood and early intervention professionals will co-plan and co-teach classes
- Educators with more training in inclusive education



CENTRE

Fostering an inclusive ecosystem

- Diverse mix of children with typically developing children making up the majority
- Environment designed to be friendly to children with developmental needs
- Inclusive organisational culture



COMMUNITY

Families as core partners

- Close collaboration with parents and caregivers to support child's progress



It helps all children

Statement from Include.sg

In an unpredictable and fast-evolving world, all children deserve to be nurtured with the qualities to thrive and grow amid the changes and challenges. Teamwork, creativity, empathy and resilience will be key.

Promoting inclusion in preschools and schools where children start to learn and grow is the first step towards creating a society where every person is celebrated for their strengths and empowered to reach their full potential.



Improve socio-emotional development

Statement from Include.sg

Students with additional needs who are educated in an inclusive setting are more accepted by their peers, have better social relationships, are less lonely, and exhibit fewer behavioural problems.

Typically developing children in inclusive learning environments develop more compassion, positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and belief in the value of diversity.





Better Academic Performance



Improved Socio-Emotional Development

It Helps All Children



Teamwork & Collaboration



Creativity & Resourcefulness



Empathy, EQ & CQ

It Creates a Better Society

Why Inclusive Education?



International Movement towards Inclusive Education

Social Policy Shifts



Singapore's Commitment to Inclusive Education

What is the challenge to including a child with a disability?

“A mismatch between the abilities and interests of the child and the demands of the environment”

(Dr Robin McWilliam, 2016)



Barriers?

What do you see as some of the main barriers to inclusion?

- Lack of confidence by teachers
- Need for more training
- Pressure from other parents
- Funding
- Number of teachers per students
- Physical environment
- Lack of equipment
- Attitude
- Leadership

Attitude
Leadership



Which of these are potential barriers to inclusion and which are facilitators of inclusion? Write down in your notes which number goes in which column

1. Partnering with parents and other professionals

2. Adapting the environment and program so that all children can participate

3. Restricting a child's attendance because the child has a disability

4. The belief that children with a disability should attend a specialised setting

5. Believing that all children have the potential to learn

6. Suggesting that a child's needs will be better met at another program

7. Lack of knowledge and experience of educators

8. Knowing that children with disabilities are more like all children than different

Which of these are potential barriers to inclusion and which are facilitators of inclusion? Answers

Enablers

- 1. Partnering with parents and other professionals**
- 2. Adapting the environment and program so that all children can participate**
- 5. Believing that all children have the potential to learn**
- 8. Knowing that children with disabilities are more like all children than different**

Barriers

- 3. Restricting a child's attendance because the child has a disability**
- 4. The belief that children with a disability should attend a specialised setting**
- 6. Suggesting that a child's needs will be better met at another program**
- 7. Lack of knowledge and experience of educators**

Benefits for children with disabilities

- Children with disabilities and developmental delays can increase language (Justice et al., 2014) and social skills (Hemmeter et al., 2016) through interaction with typically developing children.
- Children with disabilities who are included in early childhood educational settings with their typically developing peers have more positive outcomes than children who are not (Rausch & Strain, 2021).
- Inclusive early childhood education settings deliver higher quality education to all children (Lawrence, Smith & Banerjee, 2016).



What about my typically developing child?

Have you heard this from others?

“I think that a certain child takes up too much teaching time.”

“I am worried about the academic impact of my child with those other children in the centre.”



Better academic performance

Statement from Include.sg

Studies have also shown that both children with additional needs and those without do better academically in an inclusive setting.

Teachers have to engage in differentiated teaching in an inclusive environment, and this means that teaching is tailored to different learning styles and speeds, which benefits all children in a class, not just those with identified needs.



Benefits for all children

Inclusive educational settings can lead to better academic performance for all students.

Teaching strategies in inclusive environments are often better tailored to individual learning styles and needs. Therefore, enhancing the educational experience for everyone.

A varied student body can bring richer discussions, creative problem-solving, and dynamic learning into the program or classroom. This can stimulate critical thinking and improve academic outcomes across the board.

Understanding and respecting differences can foster harmonious communities, reduce bullying and discrimination. Consequently, children are more prepared to thrive in the real world.



Benefits of Inclusive Education in Early Childhood



Enhanced Social Skills

Inclusive education allows all children to engage with peers from various backgrounds. They learn to communicate effectively, collaborate on tasks, and navigate social nuances with a more diverse group of peers, helping to develop their social skills in a real-world context.



Improved Learning Outcomes

Inclusive educational settings can lead to better academic performance for all students as teaching strategies in inclusive environments are often better tailored to individual learning styles and needs.



Fostering Empathy and Respect

Early exposure to a diverse range of peers helps children learn to understand, appreciate, and respect differences. When children learn to put themselves in the shoes of others who may be different from them, they develop a deeper sense of empathy.

Do you have an inclusion statement?

Image credit Unsplash: Jerry Wang



An inclusion statement is a simple idea that is easily applied to all settings.

You would display it as a poster, but you could also put it in the newsletter at the start of each term.

What could this look like?

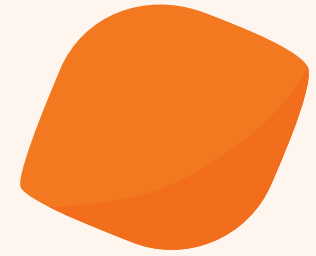
Here at *(service name)* we provide an inclusive program. That means that all children are welcome here.

We know that children learn by being with each other, with us and through the program we provide for them. We believe that every child, regardless of their background or ability belongs here at *xxx*.

When we plan our program, we look at the individual needs of children and plan activities to meet those needs, and this will look different for different children. Some children in our program have additional needs and require extra help to play and learn with others.

For example, some children find it hard to sit and join in group activities and we might slowly build up the amount of time we expect them to sit with a group of children. These children might need to move away from the group after a few minutes. We have extra training especially to make it easier to do this and not disrupt the children who are ready to learn in a group.

Other children may need support to play, talk or be with others. They are all learning and we are trained to work with and support all children.



High Expectations



All children have the potential to learn

High Expectations

All children have the capacity to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their families, early childhood educators and support professionals have high expectations for their achievement in learning and development.

ECA/ECIA Position statement on the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECEC (2012)



High Expectations

Having high expectations is especially important in achieving better outcomes for the most vulnerable children.

Recognises that some children need additional supports and different learning opportunities and experiences to learn and develop.

When children are expected to succeed, they are more likely to succeed.



All children have the potential to learn, grow and develop.

It is widely accepted in the early childhood field that each child has a unique learning trajectory that can be supported, encouraged and scaffolded to achieve the best outcomes for that individual child

(MacNaughton, 2003; Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2008).

This principle promotes each child's right to an education that develops the child's "personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (United Nations, 1989, Article 29). Expectations can be defined as the strong belief that somebody will achieve something. 'High expectations' for children therefore encompass the belief that children will achieve their full potential. This means that early childhood professionals communicate and advocate the highest expectations for every child.

Reflect back on your own journey before we watch this video

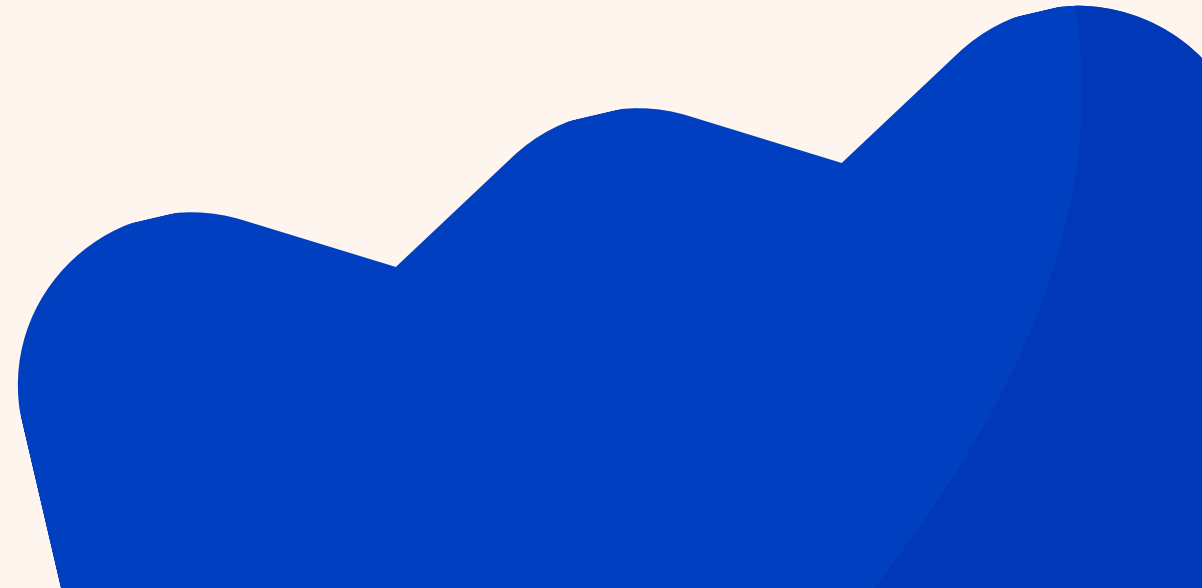


Write down

- Who had high expectations of you?
- Yourself? A parent? A grandparent? A teacher?



Program adaptations



Meaningful Participation

- Meaningful participation is the engine of development and the key to attaining a true sense of belonging and a satisfactory quality of life (Moore, 2012).
- Meaningful participation is the context in which children learn, develop and belong.



Let's explore

Let's explore some of these core adaptations that contribute to the inclusion of all children!



[Image from Unsplash, credit Gautam Arora](#)

IDEA in the USA

Individuals with Disability Education Act: 1975!

This act became law in the US just over 50 years ago.

In 2025 a research paper explored the impact of 50 years of IDEA.

Many of these practices and technologies – such as universal design for learning, assistive technology, and positive behavioural interventions and supports – would not only be proven to help students with disabilities, but also to benefit their peers without disabilities.

'I think it's exciting that special education has driven a lot of the research that's impacted all of education.'

LINDSAY JONES

CEO of CAST



Embedded Learning/ Best Practice



Embedded learning refers to embedding strategies and goals for a child into the program's everyday activities, routines and transitions.

Together, the family, educators and other members of the team, identify what the child knows or can do, and what the child needs to learn or do to participate meaningfully throughout the day.

Embedded Learning

Embedded learning opportunities support meaningful participation because they:

- address skills that are important to everyday activities
- focus on what the child needs 'right now'
- are motivating for the child because they consider interests
- provides lots of opportunities to learn and practice important skills in meaningful contexts
- are skills that can be taught in activities alongside other children
- use re-occurring activities and authentic materials



Child's name: Isla

Goal: Isla will choose between two activities and will indicate her preference verbally or through gestures

Routine/activity	Plan/action	Review/reflection
Arrival	Ask Isla if she would like to play inside or outside	
Free play	Provide Isla with photos of two free play activities and ask her to indicate which one she would like to do	
Group time	Have two books/songs/games and ask children to choose which one they would like to do first - include Isla	
Outside play	Ask Isla to choose equipment for the sandpit, e.g. tea set or dolls	
Lunch time	Invite Isla to choose between two seat/tables at lunch time	



Child's name: Jacob

Goal: Jacob will be able to follow single one-part instructions

Routine/activity	Plan/action	Review/reflection
Arrival	Ask Jacob to find his bag. Then ask him to pick up his bag. Then ask him to hang his bag>(instructions broken into single parts)	
Free play	Show Jacob his favourite activity, and then ask him to come and play.	
Group time	Show Jacob his mat seat and then say "Jacob, sit on the mat"	
Outside play	Provide Jacob with a photo of outside, and say, Jacob, time to go outside	
Lunch time	Invite Jacob to sit down, and use single instructions etc	



Therapy is happening every day at Kinder both inside and outside and it is;

- Child centred,
- Child initiated
- and **FUN**

From Langwarrin Park Pre-school.

Courtesy of Kaye Hall



Adaptions every day



Current best practice

Children learn best when provided with multiple opportunities to practice developmentally appropriate and functional skills in real life settings.

The key to promoting the acquisition of such skills by children with developmental disabilities lies in what happens to children in the times and settings when the specialist Early Childhood Intervention staff are *not* there.

Benefits

- Instead of 1-hour therapy a week, the child has therapy goals and activities within the entire day.
- Educators feel that the programs are achievable and relevant to them.
- Educators are more empowered to take on ideas as they have genuine input into the programs.
- There is more consistency of approach with the child as everyone is using the same ideas. I.e. Parents, grandparents, aunties, neighbours, and educators. Everyone is using the same words or signs or lifting techniques

Therapy as fun

Doing therapy in this case, is fun, part of the existing program and is the same for all children who join in that activity, encouraging a sense of belonging. (***Learning through Play. P15 EYLF***) An action song that encourages balancing, deep knee bends and raising the arms can be even more effective than the therapist taking the child into a room for a series of exercises.



Abdullah's Story

- As you are watching Abdullah's story write down the inclusive practices that you see.
- What you write down will be discussed in your teams in the next few weeks

What did you notice?

Take a minute to write down what you noticed

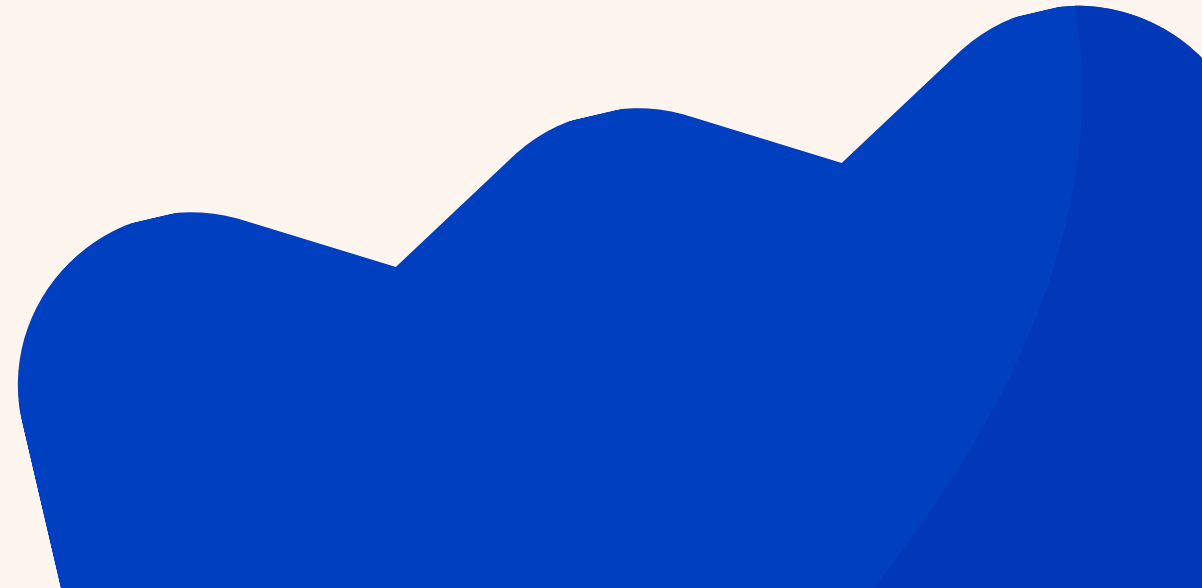
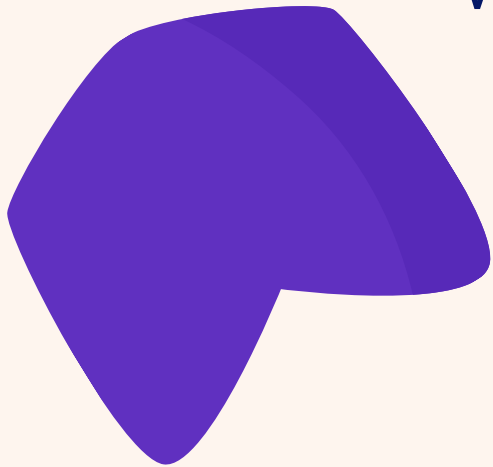
Discuss in your teams next week what adaptations you noticed, and your thoughts on them.





Program Adaptations

What you can do in your day-to-day program



Program Adaptations



Rather than a focus on "fixing" a child's skill deficit, this approach focuses on adapting the **SITUATION** (activity or routine) where something is not going as expected.

(CARA's Kit, (2007) Suzanne A. Milbourne, & Philippa Campbell)

CARA stands for Creating Adaptations for Routines and Activities

Program Adaptations

When considering the adaptations we first look at the least intrusive change that we might try starting with:

- the environment
- the activity/materials
- the way we communicate
- through to providing more active adult support.



Adaptations for Routines and Activities

Least intrusive

Most intrusive

Here's the situation	Environment	Activity/materials	Communication	Adult assistance
<p>Joshua has separation anxiety. He is upset on arrival and cries when his mother leaves.</p>	<p>Have activities that are of interest to Joshua set up before he arrives, e.g. trainset, vehicles. Use photos of the activities to encourage Joshua to make choices.</p> <p>Extend Joshua's interests by adding other materials to the trainset and vehicles, e.g. blocks, figures.</p> <p>Set up some of Joshua's favourite activities in a quiet area of the room.</p>	<p>Provide Joshua with a social story about his day. Include photos of educators, activities and other children. Include Henry in the photos. Include his mother saying good bye and arriving back to pick him up.</p> <p>Start the day outside if possible. Joshua is more settled outdoors.</p>	<p>Tell Joshua that his mother will be leaving and reassure him that she will return.</p> <p>Ask him to choose an activity that he would like to do.</p> <p>Have a visual schedule of the day's activities available for all children. Ask Joshua's mother to show him the schedule each morning, e.g. first you will play with the trains, and then you will go outside etc. through to home time.</p>	<p>Take Joshua to a favourite activity and stay with him until he becomes engaged in the activity.</p> <p>Use this time to extend Joshua's social and communication skills by inviting one or two children to join you.</p>

Adaptations for Routines and Activities

Least intrusive



Most intrusive →

Here's the situation	Environment	Activity/materials	Communication	Adult assistance
<p>Jake is having difficulty sitting still and listening to a story</p>	<p>Provide different seating options, e.g. small carpet squares or cushions to define spaces</p> <p>Sit him on the outside edge of the mat – not enclosed by other children and adults.</p>	<p>Shorten the length of group time activities or consider smaller, spontaneous groups throughout the day</p> <p>Choose Jake's favourite book or song to gain his attention – he is interested in cars and planes</p> <p>Use visual props to gain Jake's attention, e.g. puppet, felt board</p> <p>Have some quiet activities set up nearby so he can move away from the group if needed</p> <p>Provide a balance between sitting still and doing actions or movement</p>	<p>Provide individual instructions and directions where possible</p> <p>Use Jake's name. He may not respond to directions given to the whole group</p> <p>Use photos to show the children what will happen next, e.g. first we will sing a song, next we will listen to a story etc.</p>	<p>Sit Jake close to you</p> <p>Have an educator sit beside Jake for a short period of time and then move away when he is settled, or direct him to a quiet activity nearby</p>

Adaptations for Routines and

Least intrusive

Most intrusive

Here's the situation	Environment	Activity/materials	Communication	Adult assistance
<p>Rest time is not working. Some children are noisy and disturb other children who are trying to rest</p>				



Here's the situation

Rest time is not working. Some children are noisy and disturb other children who are trying to rest

Step one: Look at the environment

- **Divide the room into separate areas so that the rest area is as far away from quiet activities as possible.**

Step two: Adapt the materials or activity

- Ask the children how rest time is working for them.
- Ask them what they think would make it work better.
- Together develop a couple of rules around rest time. Keep them simple and remind the children of the rules before rest time.
- Set up quiet activities - divide into areas for 1,2, and 3 children.



Here's the situation (continued)

Rest time is not working. Some children are noisy and disturb other children who are trying to rest

Step three: Communicating the activity

- **Provide the children with a choice between the 2 activities – rest or play quietly.**
- **Provide photos of quiet activities and ask children to choose which one they would like to do first.**

Step four: Adult assistance

- **One educator sitting with the children participating in quiet activities and another with the resting children.**

Adaptations for Routines and Activities

Least intrusive

Most intrusive

Here's the situation	Environment	Activity/materials	Communication	Adult assistance
<p>Li Li interrupts other children at tabletop activities and does not yet understand how to concentrate in a large group.</p>				

Here's the situation

Li Li interrupts other children at tabletop activities and does not yet understand how to concentrate in a large group.

Step one: Look at the environment

- **Initially offer Li Li a tabletop activity that is only set up for one or two children.**
- **Start with a set up for one and add a chair as she progresses.**

Step two: Adapt the materials or activity

- **Observe Li Li's favourite activity and make sure that is set up on the table for one so that she can achieve success for herself.**

Here's the situation (continued)

Li Li interrupts other children at tabletop activities and does not yet understand how to concentrate in a large group.

Step three: Communicating the activity

- **Li Li communicates with some key word signs, and she is able to point at things to indicate her preferences.**
- **Use Photos to show Li Li where to sit and how the activity works.**
- **Point to the table and use the sign for sit down.**

Step four: Adult assistance

- **One educator can stay with Li Li on her first few times at the table if she needs more support to achieve success.**
- **The educator can support Li Li to commence the activity and then move away gradually.**

Adaptations for Routines and Activities

Least intrusive

Most intrusive

Here's the situation	Environment	Activity/materials	Communication	Adult assistance
<p>Li Li interrupts other children at tabletop activities and does not yet understand how to concentrate in a large group.</p>	<p>Initially offer Li Li a table top activity that is only set up for one or two children. Start with a set up for one, and add a chair as she progresses.</p>	<p>Observe Li Li's favourite activity and make sure that is set up on the table for one so that she can achieve success for herself.</p>	<p>Li Li communicates with some key word signs and she is able to point at things to indicate her preferences.</p> <p>Use Photos to show Li Li where to sit and how the activity works.</p> <p>Point to the table and use the sign for sit down.</p>	<p>One educator can stay with Li Li on her first few times at the table if she needs more support to achieve success.</p> <p>The educator can support Li Li to commence the activity and then move away gradually.</p>

Program Adaptations

- **Understand the child's needs – gather information from the family, your own observations and interactions with the child, and from talking with other professionals.**
- **Decide what you want to happen – plan for implementation, consider what the child and other adults would be doing? How would the environment look?**
- **Try the adaptation -try it everyday for 2-4 weeks and then consider if the adaptation has changed the situation. If not, repeat the process using the next adaptation in the hierarchy.**



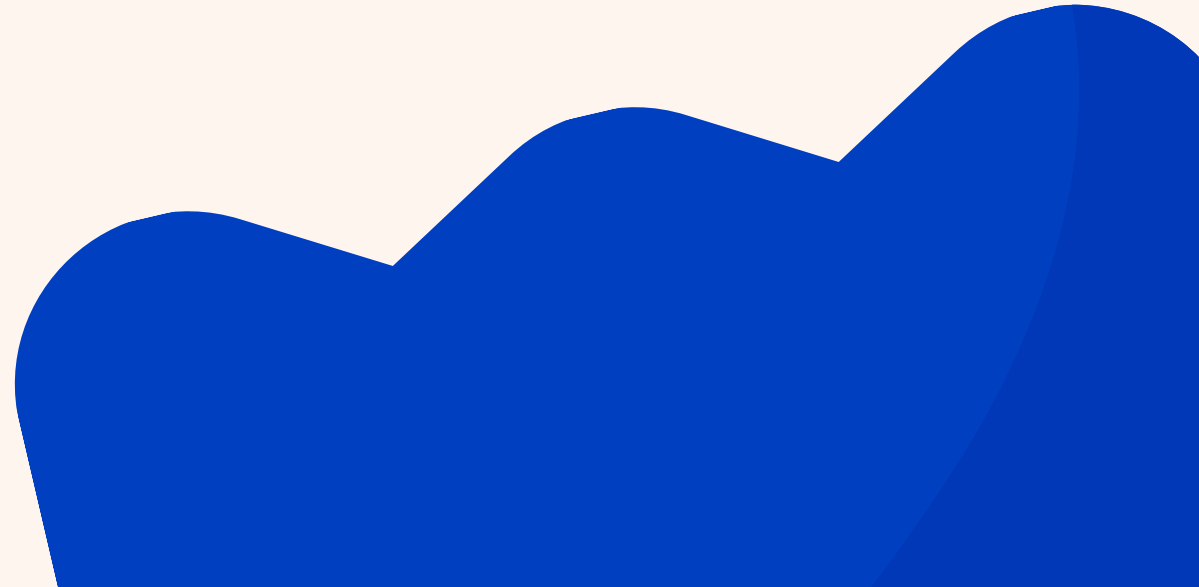
Modelling responses to difference or diversity for all children



“Sometimes we focus on the child to be included, but we need to also model/teach all children how to respond when you encounter someone who is different to you.”



Some useful tips to support your program



Acknowledge rather than praise



We need to try and replace praise with giving children information about what they have achieved, rather than judging them or their efforts.

Giving information is called acknowledgement, whereas delivering judgments is known as praise. The differences are that:

Acknowledgement



Acknowledgment teaches children to evaluate their own efforts; whereas praise gives your evaluation of these. You can ask children's self evaluations by saying:

- *'What do you think of that?' ...*
- *'Was that fun?' ...*
- *'Are you pleased with yourself?'*
- *'You seem pleased that you did that so well.'*
- *"Are you happy with how you acted?"*



Unlike praise, acknowledgment does not judge children, their behaviour or achievements. You might offer an opinion, such as:

- *'I admire how much work you put into that',*
- *or 'I appreciate that you helped pack away: it meant we could all go to the park a little earlier'.*
- We can also imply a positive opinion with *'Congratulations!'* or *'Wow! You did it!'*.



Our feedback can be most honest when we focus on the processes that children use, rather than the outcomes that they produce, such as a *'beautiful'* painting.

It is more authentic to comment on the skills they exercise – such as planning ahead, being persistent, being creative, solving problems, displaying patience, showing curiosity, exercising self-control, working independently, or cooperating with others



Acknowledge rather than praise

Instead of *“Great job, I’m so proud of you for packing up so quickly”*.

Try saying -

“I noticed that you packed away quickly, that’s great, we will get to go outside sooner”.

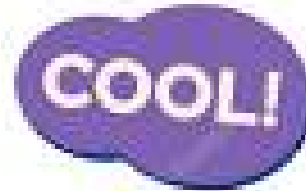
Try this for yourself, How else could you say these three?

“Well done, I like that you did that pretty painting.”

“Great job, I’m proud of you for packing up.”

“What a good job you did. You made me happy putting the cups away.”

“Good Job!”



The physical environment can have a negative effect



Be mindful of:

- Large open play spaces
- Undefined play spaces
- Noise and overcrowding
- Insufficient equipment
- High temperature in the room

Spaces to retreat

All children at every stage of development and at every age need somewhere to 'retreat'

A comfy chair, some cushions, soft lighting, some artistic pictures, a music player, some feely beads or other tactile calming material

A good idea to have a couple of 'retreats'

All adults and children respect the child's need for some 'alone' time

Some activities set up for solitary play



Useful tips

- Introduce 1 or 2 rules for activities. Keep them simple and remind children of the rules.
- Don't offer choices if the child doesn't have a choice – use statements e.g. *“When we have packed up the blocks, we can go outside.”*
- Phrase choices carefully, e.g. *“You can pack up the blocks or pack up the train set.”*
- Don't accept 'no'. Keep repeating the choice and tell the child that they can do it by themselves or with your help.



Useful tips

Avoid saying 'use your words'. Model instead, e.g.

"I see that you want the bike. Can you ask John for a turn on the bike when he has finished"? Or "I see that you want the bike. You could say, 'John, can I have a turn in five minutes?'"

Model what to say instead of saying use your words, then you are teaching how to ask for a turn

Go to a person, not a place!



Thanks not please

Research tells us that children respond better when you say “thanks” rather than “please.”

Eg

Jamie, thanks for packing up the trains. **Rather than**
Jamie, please pack up the trains.

Jamie, thanks for sitting in your seat. **Rather than**
Jamie, please sit in your seat.



How can we help?



Scaffolding –lots of opportunities to practice a skill



Lots of creative play – provides opportunities for problem solving in a safe way



Predictable routines



Model social behaviours and language



Helping them cope with stress – through physical exercise

Remember

- All children have a right to be included in all educational settings
- Inclusion has benefits for all children and society as a whole
- Our role is to adapt the program, rather than trying to change or “fix” the child
- Interventions should be embedded into the program, not an add on extra
- Have high expectations for all children and presume competence



Where to from here?




Take a few minutes and write on your notes:

1 or 2 things that you are going to think about and discuss in your team

1 or 2 things that you are going to **COMMIT** to trying next week

EmilysQuotes.Com



When a flower doesn't bloom
you fix the environment in which it grows,
not the flower.

-Alexander den Heijer-



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