



Building better futures
for children with disabilities

Inclusion of children with a disability

From policy to practice

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Introduction

- How can policy support a positive context for the inclusion of children with a disability?
- What practices need to be developed to support inclusion in early education?
- How can early intervention help build the foundations for inclusion within families and communities?

What am I going to talk about?

- Rights
- Two measures of inclusion
- Children's policy in Australia
- A video of inclusion
- Early intervention and inclusion



Background

- The focus of my work is on inclusion in the early years - before children go to school
- Children from 0 – 5 years

There are two main types of children's services

- Australian Government funds Child Care
- State and Territory Governments fund educational programs for 4 year olds

Rights of young children with a disability

- Children with a disability share universal rights with all children - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1990)
- Children with a disability have specific rights - UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006)
- UNESCO Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994) states the importance of inclusive education
- Australia has its own relevant legislation (HREOC, 1986–2004)

ECA and ECIA, 2012

General Comment on the 'Right to inclusive education'

- First legally binding document
- Inclusive education is a fundamental human right
- A child's right to inclusive education takes precedence over the responsibilities of parents and carers
- A lack of resources or financial crisis is not justification for little or no progress
- It is not possible to also maintain specialist / segregated settings

UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2016)

How do we understand inclusion?



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How do we understand inclusion?

- Exclusion – when a child is directly or indirectly excluded
- Segregation - an isolated program
- Integration – program is pre-established and will not be adapted
- Inclusion – systematic modification or adaptation of all the elements

UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016)

Service models

- Full inclusion – children with disabilities are full participants
- The cluster model – a small group of children with disabilities is grafted onto an existing program
- Reverse inclusion – a small group of typically developing children in a specialised program
- Social inclusion – children with and without disabilities are accommodated in the same general location

Guralnick, M.J. (2001)

How do we see inclusion?



The SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale

The Principles Scale - centre's commitment to inclusion

- Zero Reject – no child is turned away
- Naturally Occurring Proportions – the proportion of children with disabilities in a service should be consistent with the proportion in the community
- Same Hours of Attendance Available to All Children – children with a disability should not attend for a limited time

The SpecialLink Scale

- Full Participation – the child with a disability participates in all the activities
- Maximum Feasible Parent Participation – all parents encouraged to be engaged with the service
- Pro-Active Strategies and Advocacy for High Quality, Inclusive Child Care – the service advocates for inclusion

Sharon Hope Irwin (2009)

The SpecialLink Scale

The Practices - quality of practices used to support inclusion

- Physical Environment and Special Needs - accessibility
- Equipment and Materials – supportive for participation of all children
- Director and Inclusion - leadership
- Staff Support

The SpecialLink Scale

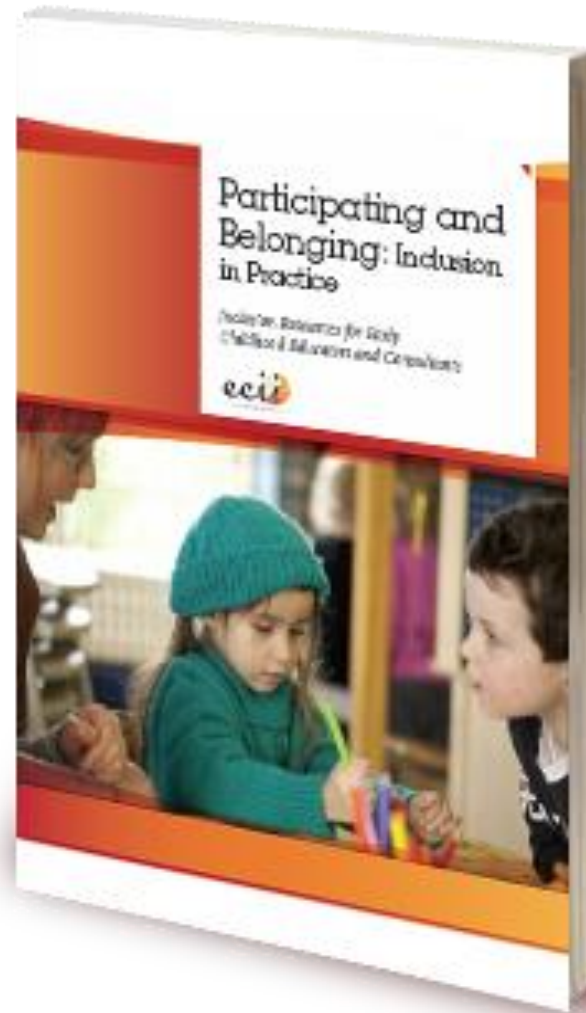
- Staff Training
- Therapies: Physiotherapy (PT); Occupational Therapy (OT); Speech & Language (S&L); Behavioural Consultation – therapists working in a service support inclusive practices
- Individual Program Plans (IPPs)
- Parents of Children with Special Needs – parents are supported to be engaged

The SpecialLink Scale

- Involvement of Typical Children – children without disabilities are involved with children with a disability
- Board of Directors and Other Similar Units – supportive of inclusion
- Preparing for Transition to School

Sharon Hope Irwin (2009)

Participating and belonging: Inclusion in practice



Participating and belonging: Inclusion in practice

Three themes:

- Inclusion readiness – services are prepared for and positive about inclusion
- Resources to support inclusion – services are well informed
- Practices that support inclusion- services make adaptations to the program

Inclusion Readiness

- Leadership
- Quality
- Enrolment
- Full Participation
- Parent involvement

Resources to Support Inclusion

- Families
- Consultants
- Training
- Mentoring and Support
- Funding Program

Practices that Support Inclusion

- Transitions
- Individualised Programs
- Physical Environment
- Equipment and Toys
- Children's Relationships
- Staff Team

Noah's Ark Inc, 2012

Inclusive Classroom Profile

- Adaptations of space and materials/equipment
- Adult involvement in peer interactions
- Adults' guidance of children's activities and play
- Conflict resolution
- Membership
- Relationships between adults and children

Inclusive Classroom Profile

- Support for communication
- Adaptation of group activities
- Transitions between activities
- Feedback
- Family-professional partnerships
- Monitoring children's learning

Elena Soukakou (2016)

Themes from Inclusive Classroom Profile

- **Adult Partnerships**
- **Participation in the group**
- **Adaptations**
- **Learning**



Themes in the ICP

Adult partnerships

- Family – professional partnerships

Participation in the group

- Relationships between children and adults
- Adult involvement in peer interactions
- Membership
- Conflict resolution

Adaptations

- Adaptations of Space, Materials and equipment
- Adaptation of group activities
- Transitions between activities

Learning

- Adult guidance of children's free choice activities and play
- Support for communication
- Feedback
- Monitoring children's learning

Early Years Learning Framework

Goals for all children

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009

Early Years Learning Framework

- *Play-based learning* is described as: a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009

Summary

- How we understand the right to inclusion
- How we see the context that supports inclusion
- How we see the learning environment
- How the context for inclusion is created by the early childhood services policies and regulations.

Video: Abdullah's story

- **Amne**, who is Abdullah's mother
- **Elicia Napoli**, who is the director of the child care centre
- **Katrina Russell**, works in early intervention and is a therapist who visits the centre
- **Carol**, an educator working with Abdullah
- **Mary Athan**, a teacher who runs the educational program for 4 year olds

The video goes for 8 minutes.

So what does the video focus on?

- Welcoming environment for parent and child
- Social engagement
- Inclusion in all activities
- Learning and development

Strengthening Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Intervention Services

A self-reflection tool for early childhood intervention to think about their work across three areas:

- The family
- Early Childhood settings
- Community Settings

NSW Chapter of Early Childhood Intervention Australia

SELF-REFLECTION ON INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Access
- Participation
- Functional Skills
- Environmental adaptations
- Natural environments and routines
- Responsive care giving

SELF-REFLECTION ON INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Responsive service delivery
- Mobilising personal Supports
- Promoting attitudinal change
- Capacity building
- Specialist supports

(Moore, Symes, Bull, 2014)

Themes from Self Reflection Tool

- **Facilitators of Inclusion**
- **Building the capacity of families or staff**
- **Child development**



Themes from Self Reflection Tool

Facilitators of inclusion

- Access
- Participation
- Making environmental adaptations
- Promoting attitudinal change

Building the capacity of families or staff

- Care giving
- Mobilising personal supports
- Providing specialist supports
- Responsive service delivery

Child development

- Building functional skills
- Natural environments and everyday routines.

Home

- Children with a disability may not be treated on an equal basis as their siblings
- Families may need support to know how to adapt what they are doing
- Developing skills at home provides valuable foundations for moving into the community

Community inclusion

- Important for both the family and the child
- It is easy for families to become isolated
- When families are isolated then they have fewer resources and supports
- Children learn from being out in the community and participating in activities

Conclusion

Some key themes

- Facilitators of inclusion – access, participation, readiness
- Building adult capacity – partnerships, resources
- Adaptations – environment, activities
- Children's learning – social engagement, developmental progress, functional skills

Additional information

- Specialink Scale and Inclusive Classroom Profile can be purchased online
- ECI Service Provider Self Reflection Tool

<https://www.ecia-nsw.org.au/projects/inclusion-tool>

- National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

<http://fpg.unc.edu/node/2880>

- Division of Early Childhood Recommended Practices

<http://www.dec-sped.org/updating-the-practices>

THANK YOU

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