

U

O

W

# Action for Inclusion – how teachers can make inclusive education work in schools

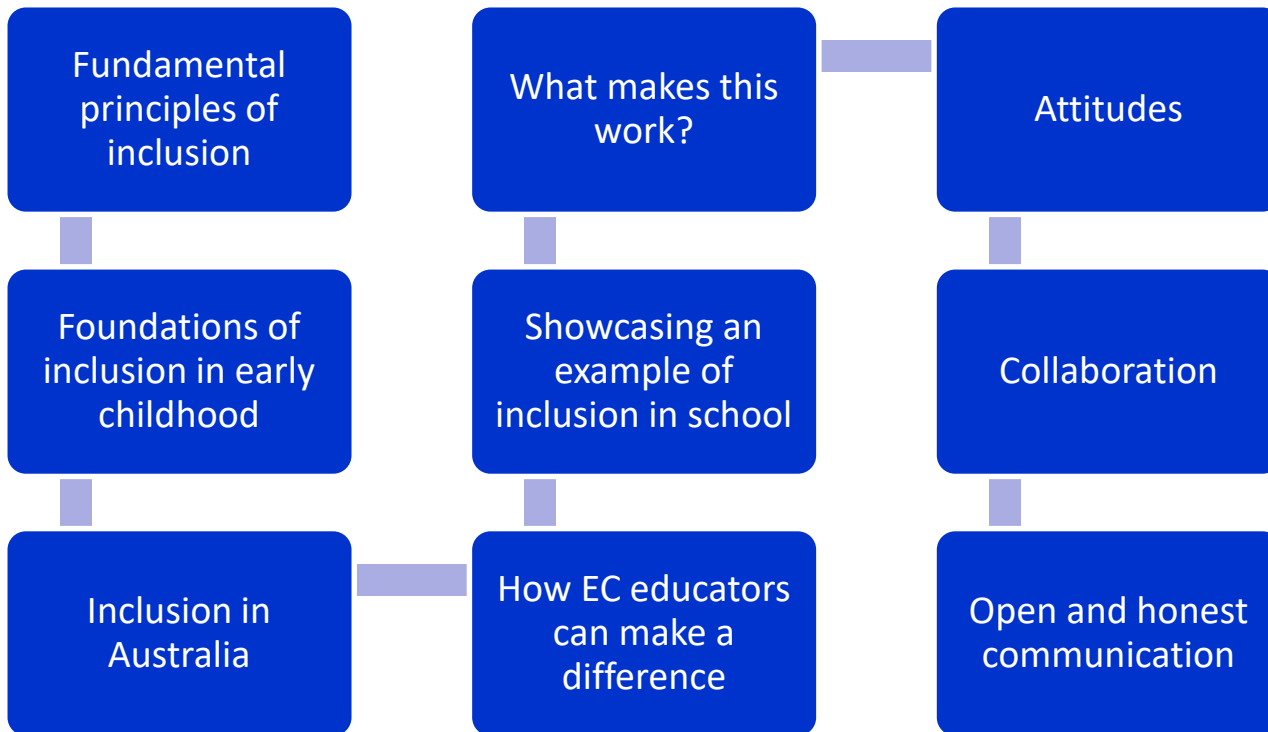
NECIC 2018

Dr Jane Warren



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

# Overview



# Fundamental principles of inclusion

(ECIA / ECA Joint Position Statement)

- Best interests of the child
- Importance of families
- Social inclusion
- Diversity
- Equity
- High expectations for every child
- Evidence- based practice

<https://www.ecia.org.au/Representation/Position-Statements>

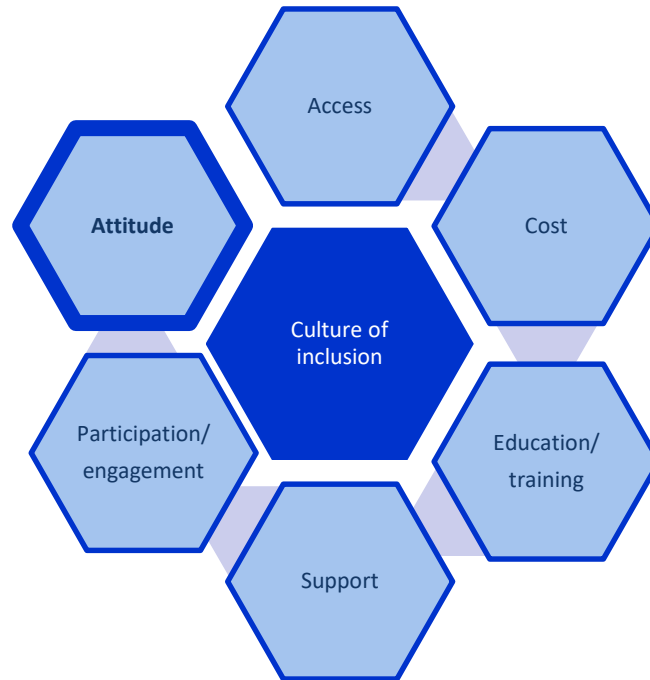
Authentic inclusion is about meaningful  
participation and belonging



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

# Foundations of Inclusion

- Need to start in early childhood



# My doctoral research

- Transition of children with disabilities into early childhood education and care centres
- Two groups
  - parents of children with disabilities
  - Early childhood educators

## Key Findings:

- Open communication valued by everyone
- Experience and training impacted on the educators' confidence (and often competence) and parents also had more confidence when educators were trained and experienced
- Positive attitudes toward inclusion were paramount.



# Inclusion in Australia

Early Childhood Education	Children with Disabilities	School options
Not compulsory	National Quality Framework	Disability Standards for Education
Centre-based care available for children from 6 weeks – 6 years of age	All centres expected to enrol children, but level of inclusion varies	School options include segregated schools, support classes, private and government schools
Minimum Cert III training -> Degree qualifications but limited inclusion subjects	Additional funding available for support	ALL children are entitled to go to their local public school

Inclusion should not be optional – essential action is that we all become advocates for inclusion of children with disabilities in all early childhood settings, and support families in the decisions they make for their children.



# Introducing D

- D is seven years old and is in year one at his local public school
- He is a typical boy – he loves hanging out with his friends and being cheeky



# But everything about him is not typical...

- He was born nine weeks early
- As a consequence he has a moderate level of brain damage which was detected when he was one month old.
- He spent his first four months of his life in hospital.
- When he was ten months old, he was diagnosed with cortical vision impairment.
- At 12 months old, he was diagnosed with general cerebral palsy
- At 13 months old he was diagnosed (and successfully treated) with Hepatoblastoma (liver cancer).
- D has since been given the classification of GMFSC level 5 spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, and falls under the diagnosis of severe Global Developmental Delay





# Early childhood action

- Setting high expectations – for D and for other children
- Facilitating inclusion
- Laying foundations
- Helping parents consider options



# Transition to school

- Because preschool was a success, D's family felt confident that school would be too.



# Transition was an extensive process

- Parent initially visited school
- School Principal visited preschool in year before D started
- Preschool teachers visited the school
- Kindergarten teacher met D in year before he began, and she visited preschool
- D attended kinder orientation
- Parent made video to introduce D to the school community
- Special equipment was sorted out and ready to go for when D began
- Lots of communication between parents and school
- Buddies in class



# Teacher attitudes

- Need to be willing to learn
- Challenges your communication – eg. Additional communication with parents (communication book), therapists, etc.
- Be positive

“D has absolutely had a big impact on me as a teacher. I now feel more confident in my ability to reach all students no matter what barriers there are. He has taught me to be flexible and more accountable for what I do and the way that I teach. He's taught me that every single person deserves the right to a quality education in a mainstream setting, and that it is possible! Children can flourish if given the opportunity to reach their full potential, and I am certainly happy and proud to see D do exactly that”.



# Parent views of teacher attitudes

- Parents need teachers to realise how important inclusion is
- While parents are usually their child's strongest advocate, they also need teachers to advocate for their child
- Open communication critical.



# Everyone can make a difference

- We ALL have a responsibility to make inclusive education work
- Inclusion should be a choice for all families.





[jwarren@uow.edu.au](mailto:jwarren@uow.edu.au)



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA