

INCLUSION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN CARE FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN?



In Care for Newcomer Children (CNC), inclusion means that children can attend and benefit from the same program regardless of their diverse abilities. Inclusion removes barriers in order to allow all children—regardless of race, background or special needs—to fully participate. It requires full collaboration between administrators, CNC staff, families and specialists to ensure that the needs of all children are met.

Inclusion benefits everyone!

Inclusive learning environments foster a greater acceptance of individual differences. This benefits everyone concerned, including children with special needs, typically-developing children, caregivers and parents. Over time, inclusion can create a society that is accepting and understanding of everyone.

NEWCOMER CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS BENEFIT FROM AN INCLUSIVE CNC PROGRAM THROUGH:

- A more varied and responsive environment.
- Opportunities to observe, interact with and imitate children who have acquired higher-level motor, social, language and cognitive skills.
- Opportunities to learn directly from other children. Research suggests that certain skills are learned more easily from other children. Children's explanations and demonstrations are often closer to the capabilities of the child with special needs than those of adults.

TYPICALLY-DEVELOPING CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM AN INCLUSIVE CNC PROGRAM THROUGH:

- Gaining greater understanding of and respect for differences.
- Peer modeling. One child helping another provides a chance for children to learn new skills from one another, and research suggests that both children receive significant benefits from the experience. What's more, peer modeling promotes social interactions, acceptable play behaviour and enhanced use of materials.
- The development of sensitivity. Inclusion helps typically-developing children to understand and accept differences in others. Children who develop sensitivity become increasingly aware of and comfortable with their own strengths and weaknesses.

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CAREGIVERS AND PARENTS BENEFIT FROM AN INCLUSIVE CNC PROGRAM THROUGH:

- Parent support. Caregivers can provide newcomer parents of children with special needs with information and assistance in connecting with community resources and support.
- A chance for caregivers to hone their skills and become more responsive to the needs of all children and parents.
- New ways for caregivers to adapt activities and the environment to suit the needs of all children.

TO PROMOTE INCLUSION IN YOUR PROGRAM IT'S IMPORTANT TO WORK AS A TEAM.

Nobody can create a truly inclusive program on their own! You'll need to take a team approach. You'll also need leaders who believe in inclusion, physical environments that are accessible to all children and proper staff training.

FOR AN INCLUSIVE PROGRAM TO SUCCEED, THREE VALUES MUST BE ACCEPTED AND IMPLEMENTED:

1. Diversity – Accepting diversity means accepting the needs of all children, which come in many forms in child care programs serving newcomer children.
2. Individual Needs – The team must collaborate to consider the needs of all the children, providing support for each child to reach their full potential.
3. Flexibility – Accept that the daily plan may change. Be proactive to meet the needs of the children by breaking a task down into smaller steps and encouraging all learners to participate.

TO SUPPORT INCLUSION IN YOUR PROGRAM, GET TRAINING ON INCLUSION AND, AS A TEAM, ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO:

- Communicate using inclusive language. Label things in the room with pictures and words.
- Spend time with children and interact with them throughout the day to build and learn new skills.
- Recognize and celebrate differences and similarities through words and actions.
- Celebrate even the smallest of accomplishments.
- Create an accessible environment. Set up play situations to include children with different strengths and abilities; praising and encouraging each of their unique actions.
- Include a variety of activities, books and toys.
- Create a space that allows for quiet and noisy areas.
- Encourage typically-developing children to play with and support children with special needs by setting up simple activities that promote relationship and skill building.
- Discover each child's interests, strengths and preferences and include them in the program.
- Understand that inclusion is a "team sport" and everyone needs to participate.
- Facilitate developmentally appropriate activities to encourage children's interest in play.
- Create partnerships with parents to support inclusion.
- Advocate for and empower parents by providing them with information and resources to help them understand and advocate for their children's rights.
- Educate yourself on current resources for all types of learners in your community and share them with parents.

Visit cmascanada.ca for more resources to support your work with newcomer families



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