



Inclusion is reflection and planning

Within children's services each child is an individual and has a varying range of knowledge, skills and interests. Finding a way to program that meets each child's way of being is the challenge of educators within education and care settings.

A responsive program:

- Aims to meet the strengths and needs of all children
- Is reflective of the children, families and educators at the current time
- Is linked to the interests and play themes within the setting
- Has input from children, families and educators
- Uses observations to inform future planning

Educators should seek ways to include children's voices in their curriculum and programming decisions. By doing this, educators encourage a sense of belonging for the children and recognise children's rights to be involved in decisions impacting on them. When children feel that they belong, they are able to grow in confidence and are better able to learn and explore.

Some of the ways educators can include children's voices and input:

- Using observations, photos and work samples to allow children to reflect on their experiences
- Talking to children about how they would like to extend their play and inform future investigations
- Giving children large amounts of time with the experiences provided
- Talking to families about children's interests outside the program
- Taking time to talk with and listen to children throughout the day
- Reflecting on aspects of the day that are not working and possible reasons for this

While it is important to listen to children in developing programs and routines, consideration also needs to be given to why and how we listen to children.

Inclusion is reflection and planning

Some questions to consider:

- In your attempts to understand the 'child' how do you ensure your observations are respectful of children?
- How do issues of consent and rights intersect with your desire or need to observe children?
- How do you involve the child and their family in your attempts to interpret observations and plan meaningful and relevant experiences for them?

Some ideas to get you started:

- No one curriculum or programming approach will work perfectly for every program. Find the approach that works best for you
- Remain flexible and responsive in providing for all children's needs and interests
- Keep families informed by documenting children's learning and development
- Provide families with opportunities to talk about and contribute to program development
- Stay informed of new practices, research and resources that might enhance what you do

A fundamental factor is a sound relationship, and intimate knowledge and understanding of all children. When this occurs, educators are more able to provide a program that is relevant and responsive to children as both individuals and members of a group.

Educators are more able to understand and respond to children's individual desires and requirements when they use a strengths-based approach to observation and programming. Put simply, a strengths-based approach is about identifying and building on what a child can do rather than focusing on what they cannot do. Each child brings knowledge, skills and interests to the program which should be recognised and reflected in the program.

Key Points

- A responsive program is more meaningful for children, families and educators
- Find meaningful and respectful ways to listen to and include children's voices and ideas
- Build sound relationships with children and families in the program
- Use a strengths-based approach to promote positive outcomes and enhance program planning

If teams are unsure or have any further questions they can contact the *ACT Inclusion Support Agency (ISA)* for further assistance on **6287 3330** or via email **inclusion@commsatwork.org**

Developed by Semann & Slattery for the ACT Inclusion Support Agency.

The ACT Inclusion Support Agency is managed by Communities@Work and is an initiative of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) funded by the Australian Government.