

Catering for individual needs in infants & toddlers

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WAIATA: *Te Aroha*

Te aroha	➤ love
Te whakapono	➤ faith
Me te rangimarie	➤ and peace
Tatou tatou e	➤ be amongst us all



Obligation

- ▶ As teachers we are obliged to abide by the code of ethics and do what is right for each child and their families.
- ▶ This is further strengthened by the Regulations 2008 which states that the curriculum should:

Respect and acknowledges the aspirations of parents, family, and whānau and make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the service provider collaborates with parents and, where appropriate, the family or whānau of the enrolled children in relation to the learning and development and decision making about those children (Article 43, a, iv & b).

- ▶ The question is are we doing our part in undertaking what's right for each infant and toddler in our care?

Te Whāriki & individual needs

Te Whāriki is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipates that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood settings. The programmes of each centre will incorporate strategies to fully include children with special needs (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1996, p.11).

Te Whāriki states that “each early childhood education service should ensure that programme and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different cultures and heritages among the families of the children attending that service” (MOE, 1996, p.18).

- So the curriculum is well intended but it does not prescribe strategies on how these needs can be met.
- And maybe to a large extent it is a good idea that it doesn't because with the diversities of our children each and everyone respond to certain strategies in their own way.



The challenge

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing teachers is how to accommodate individual differences among a diverse range of children.

The purpose of this workshop is to:

1. Examine how children differ
2. Consider the different ways in which teachers can take account of these differences

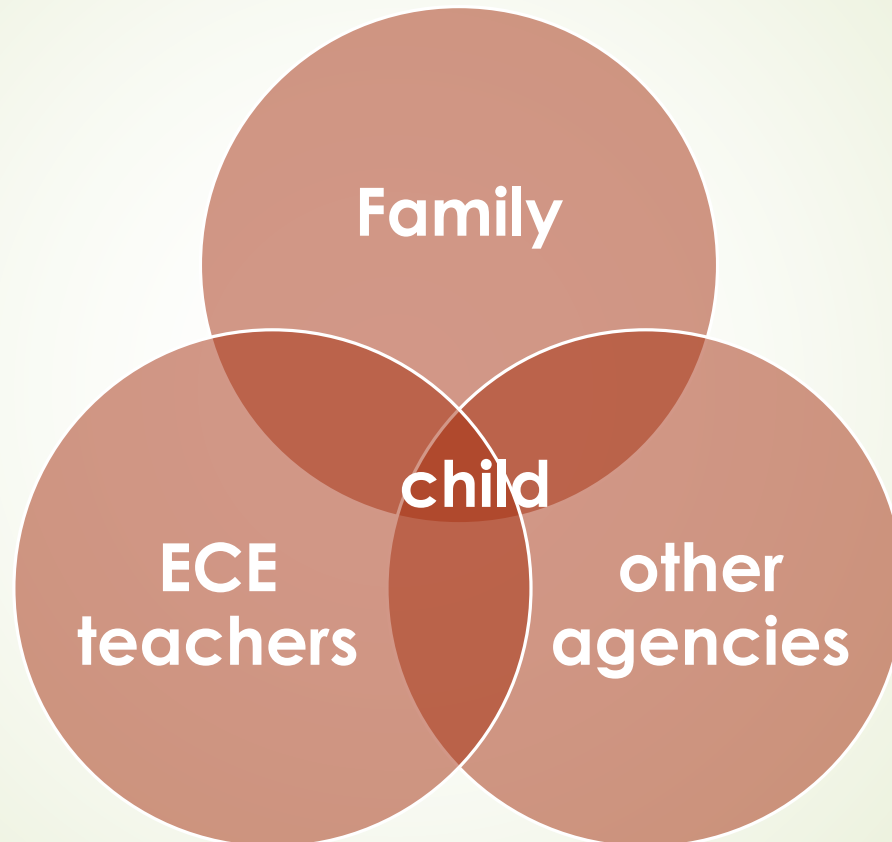


Diversity in infants and toddlers

**How diverse
are the needs
of the infants
and toddlers
in our ECE
settings?**




Where to start?



Building positive relationships

- The best starting point for us is building positive relationships with all those involved with the child.
- Respect the parents as the child's first teacher
- When teachers work in partnerships with families/whānau & all those involved with the child usually learning is enhanced and the child's needs are likely to be met (Dunn, 2008; Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005; Moffat, 2011).






What do you understand by interagency relationships?

How does a collaborative interagency approach benefit children, families & teachers?

What does a vision based on interconnecting strategies mean?



- 
- To be able to build these effective relationships there is a need to understand factors that influence individual differences in children
 - What do you think some of these factors could be?



Factors influencing individual learner differences

1. Factors that represent more or less **unchangeable and stable** aspects of the child (e.g. language, cultural values & beliefs)
2. Factors that are **changeable** and **characterised by constant change** (e.g. sleeping routines, interests, developmental needs).
3. Children's learning strategies. Learning strategies function as **mediating** variables (i.e. they influence the effect that other factors have on learning).



Ways of catering for individual needs

Factors	Ways of catering for individual learner differences
Unchangeable /stable factors	<p>The teachers will need to find ways of adjusting their strategies to suit individual needs of infants and toddlers.</p> <p>e.g Learning a bit of the infant/toddler language is helpful in settling in new children & getting them to build a sense of belonging. Getting to know the families values & beliefs in relation to the child.</p> <p>If the child has impairments that needs to be taken into account.</p> <p>Teachers cannot hope to change learners' aptitude or personality so they must ensure their programme take into consideration how each infant/toddler differ & learn.</p>
changeable factors mediating factors	<p>The teachers should always be in constant communication with families so that they know about change in routines or a development they haven't noted in order to increase their impact on learning. It is about knowing the child.</p>



In sixty seconds...



Note multicultural practices in the centres.

Is it sufficient to simply being inclusive and provide 'equal' opportunity for all the families?



Diversity in infants and toddlers

**Do all children of the
same ethnic group
have homogenous
and common learning
needs?**


***What are your
experiences?***



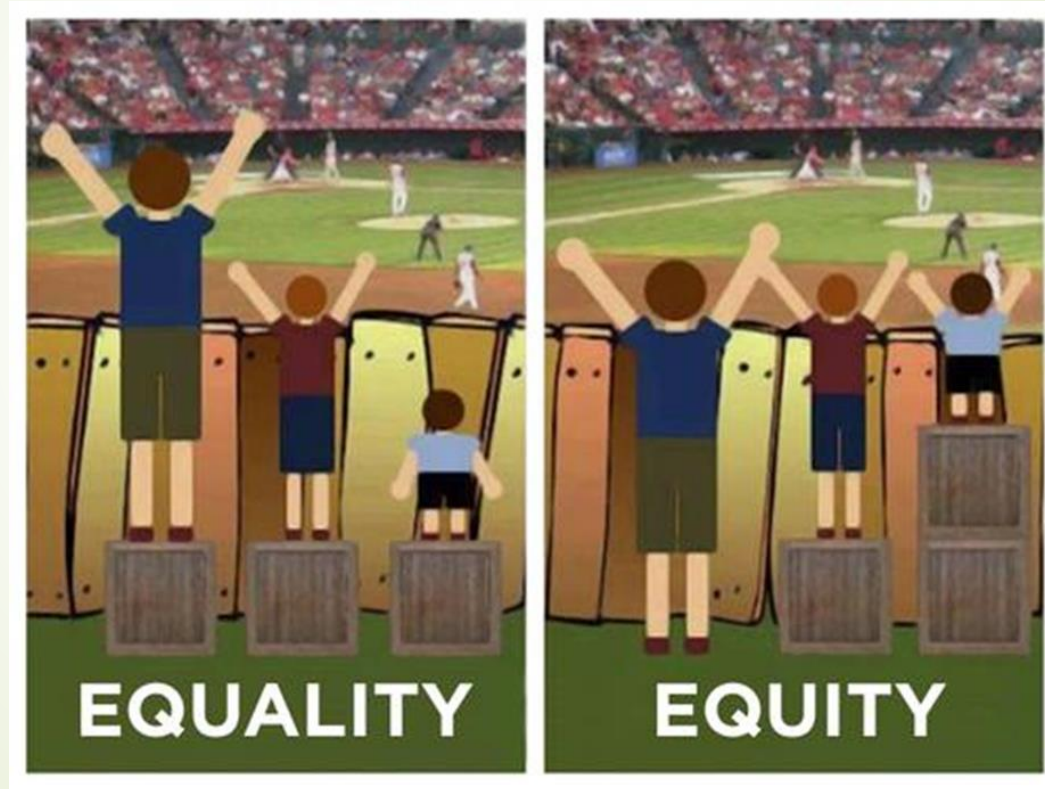
Strategies for creating inclusive environments for infants/toddlers

What are some ways in which teachers can create inclusive environments for infants and toddlers?



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- Promoting a sense of belonging--promoting experiences where all infants and toddlers participate.
 - Promoting a sense of self-worth.
 - Providing texts and speaking languages to avoid stereotypes and support equality and equity.
 - Receptive to the discourses/constructions in diversity and awareness of the impact of the market model in ECE and supporting policies that encourage equality and equity in infant and toddler education and care.
 - Inspecting our own thinking, feelings, attitudes and values overcoming 'stranger fear' to be positive role models of equality and equity within the early childhood sector.

What comes to your mind when you see the two images?



equality

Equality = SAMENESS

Equality is about **SAMENESS**, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

BUT it can **only work IF everyone starts from the SAME place**, in this example equality only works if everyone is the same height.

equity

Equity = FAIRNESS

EQUITY is about **FAIRNESS**, it's about making sure people get access to the same opportunities.

Sometimes our differences and/or history, can create barriers to participation, so we must **FIRST ensure EQUITY** before we can enjoy equality.




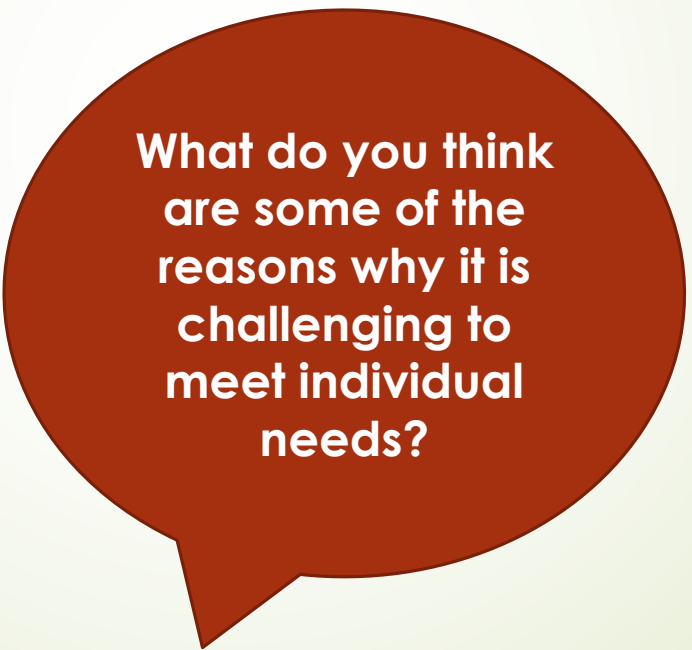
Is every infant or toddler included in the learning programme?

- ▶ “inclusion refers to the belonging, presence and participation of all learners and their families regardless of their age, gender, abilities, ethnicity or background while successfully responding to their individual needs and working together as partners in early childhood programmes” (Moffat, 2011 p.19)

Think of the infants/toddlers in your centre. Is there evidence that each one's needs are met?



- 
- ▶ Macartney (2012) assert that New Zealand has a long history of having children with diverse needs in early childhood centres, and she was quick to point out that presence does not mean participation or that individual needs are met.



**What do you think
are some of the
reasons why it is
challenging to
meet individual
needs?**



Some things to consider in catering for individual needs

- ▶ children's interest
- ▶ Multiple intelligences (H. Gardner, 1983)
- ▶ sensory Preferences (an aspect of learning style).
- ▶ physical needs
- ▶ linguistic needs
- ▶ developmental needs
- ▶ cultural needs
- ▶ behaviour needs
- ▶ accommodate the individual learner in a more holistic manner.

Teachers will need to ask themselves whether they should 'teach the class or teach the individuals', plan for the group or plan for individual children.

Planning & catering for individual differences in infants & toddlers is important for their development.

It is important that children feel that they are loved by the people who are caring for them. As Maslow stated if children do not feel that they are loved they will not have a sense of belonging and they will not have self-esteem & will not reach self-actualization.

Creating enabling environments

- It is significant to create a centre culture that is inclusive. Mackey & Lockie (2012) asserts that, “when the culture of a EC setting is one that supports teachers and its other member to draw on all the expertise and world views available to it and then to use that expertise to benefit from the broader community, that setting has the wherewithal to find solutions to problems for all. It is difficult work and complex but vital for building relationships of trust and openness” p. 183
- It is also important to have inclusive policies & philosophies as it has been proven that centres with inclusive policies and philosophies and practice them are successful in meeting individual needs (Gordon-Burns, Purdue, Rarere-Briggs, Stark, & Turnock, 2012; Moffat, 2011).
- It is imperative to check whether your environment is designed to cater for individual needs and adjust to suit where necessary as an enabling physical environments can be a barrier (Watson & McCathren, 2012).
- Examining your own attitudes is of paramount importance as teachers negative attitudes have also been proven to be a biggest barrier in meeting individual needs (Macartney & Morton, 2009).



The market model of ece as a barrier

- A market model is, “That which is delivered through competitive markets in which consumers shop for and purchase services on offer” (Lyons, 2011, p. 29).
- A business whose aim is to profit may focus more on maximizing productivity than for education and care. This changes “how we do things and how we think about what we do” (Crab & Ball, 2005, cited in Lyons, 2011, p. 30). Examples:
 - moving of staff between rooms to keep the ratio
 - teachers work ‘on the floor’
 - marketing that highlight some aspects of the service only
- While these are challenges for teachers it is important that teachers wear their advocate hats & advocate for the needs of these children in all kinds of settings they are working in.
- It is about the right of the child to be respected, treated with equity, loved, cared for and having their needs met.
- If we all have our hearts in the right place & advocate for these children we can help change the world.



Conclusion: Catering for individual needs with infants & toddlers

- Catering for individual differences is not just a matter of choosing materials & activities to suit individual children or even less a matter of teaching them learning strategies.
- Above all, it is a matter of engaging fully with individual children through love, caring & interactions. We accommodate differences in the people we meet in our daily lives in the way we interact with them and this is how teachers can best ensure that they treat children as 'complex human beings' with individual differences.

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