

# **Social inclusion and childcare:** A framework for inclusion of children with special needs in ECEC programs

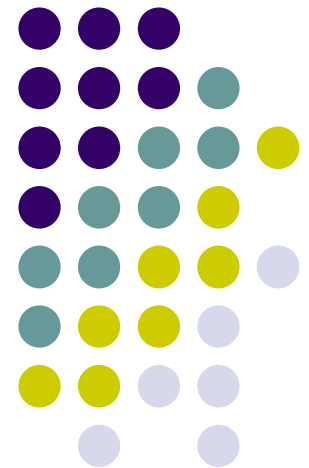
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SpeciaLink

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# Presentation overview

- Concept of social inclusion
- How does inclusion of children with special needs fit into this?
- Conditions that enable ECEC to contribute to social inclusion
- Why, and why not, ECEC contributes to social inclusion in Canada
- An ECEC *system*

# Definition: What is early childhood education and care [ECEC]?



- According to the OECD:

ECEC is “an integrated and coherent approach to policy and provision...inclusive of all children and all parents regardless of employment status or socioeconomic status. Such arrangements may fulfill a wide range of objectives including care, learning and social support” (OECD, Starting Strong, 2001)

# Concept of social inclusion



An inclusive society provides equality of life chances and offers all citizens a basic level of well-being through:

- Meaningful active participation and varied opportunities for joining in the collective experience;
- Enjoy equality!
- Share social experiences
- Attain fundamental well-being.

\* Laidlaw Foundation paper, Friendly and Lero (SOURCES-end)



# Social inclusion and ECEC

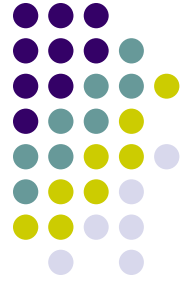
- Key concepts - connection between social inclusion and ECEC:
  - Child development enhances all children's well-being and possibilities in the broadest sense
  - The family is significant for the child, so family well-being is key (poverty, exclusion, stress)
  - Social inclusion is not merely about amelioration of deficits but also about valuing and developing all capabilities
  - Children have value as children, not merely "adults-in-waiting" (Rights perspective)

# Four goals for ECEC that contribute to social inclusion



- To support children's well-being and development – presumes a non-normative approach
- To support parents in employment, training, education, socially, personally
- To advance social solidarity - a community institution, a “meeting place”
- To contribute to equity- quality ECEC set a solid early course

# What conditions enable ECEC to contribute to social inclusion?



High quality ECEC is a foundation of lifelong learning for all children, supports families, part of mitigating disadvantage, contribution to social integration.

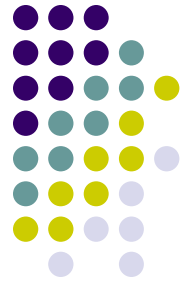
\* The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development an economic membership-based organization – basically, industrialized countries

# OECD's eight “policy lessons” – Best policy practices in ECEC



1. Systematic, integrated approach (coordinated policy framework, lead ministry)
2. Strong and equal partnership (education and care, nation supports lifelong learning from birth)
3. Universal approach with special attention to children in need of special support
4. Substantial public investment (in services, infrastructure)
5. Ongoing quality assurance (all forms of ECEC – regulated, monitored, pedagogical frameworks focusing on children's holistic development, quality assurance – participatory, democratic process)
6. Appropriate training and working conditions for staff (diverse, mixed-gender, recognition)
7. Systematic approach to monitoring and data
8. A long-term research and evaluation agenda (necessary part of continuous improvement)





# Eight policy lessons

- The OECD's comparative research found that:
  - Countries that have developed these elements show strong commitment to children and families
  - Have made efforts to ensure access to all children, special efforts for children in need of special support
  - Quality is high on the agenda in these countries

# Best policy practices: Does ECEC as it is now contribute to social inclusion in Canada?

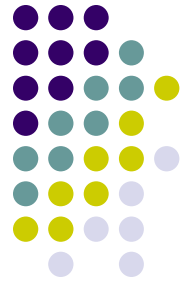


- Does Canada have a: systematic, integrated approach (coordinated policy framework, one lead ministry, articulated clear vision of the child?)
  - ✓ Yes? No?
  - ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



# Best policy practice

- Does Canada have a strong and equal partnership, integrating education and care?  
Does the nation support lifelong learning from birth?
- ✓ Yes? No?
- ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



## Best policy practice:

- Does Canada take a universal approach, with special attention to children in need of special support ?
- ✓ Yes? No?
- ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



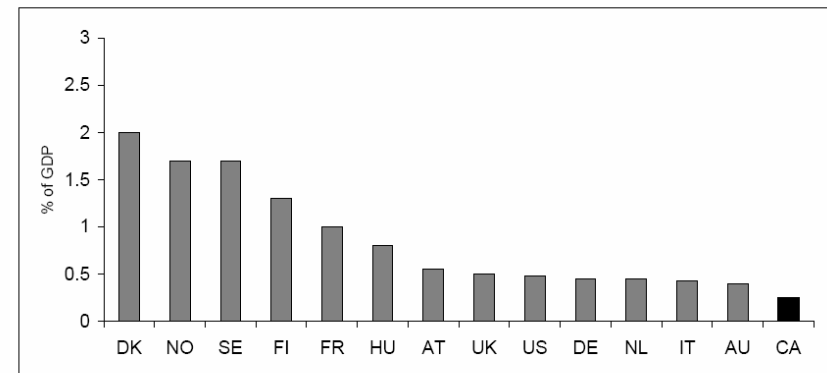
# Best policy practice

- Does Canada make substantial public investment in ECEC services, infrastructure?  
(International benchmark: At least 1% of GDP – 0-5; Canada - .25%)

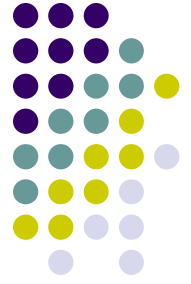
✓ Yes? No?

✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?

Figure 9. Public spending on ELCC programs for children 0-6 years as a % of GDP



Data source: OECD. (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Annex C, pg. 246.



# Best policy practice

- Does Canada provide ongoing quality assurance? Are all forms of ECEC regulated, monitored? Are there pedagogical frameworks focusing on children's holistic development? Is the process of quality assurance participatory, democratic? (Question – Is meeting provincial standards “quality”?)
- ✓ Yes? No?
- ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



# Best policy practice

- Does Canada have appropriate training, working conditions for staff? Are staff diverse, mixed-gender? Do they get appropriate recognition? (Question: What is appropriate training?)
  - ✓ Yes? No?
  - ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



## Best policy practice(s)

- Does Canada take a systematic approach to monitoring and data collection? Is there a long-term research and evaluation agenda as part of continuous improvement?
- ✓ Yes? No?
- ✓ For children with special needs, what impact does this have?



# Elements of an ECEC system...



- **Ideas** – Statement of values, goals, pedagogy, curriculum framework
- **Governance** – Clear roles and responsibilities, public management, community involvement
- **Infrastructure** – One lead ministry, legislation, regulation, ongoing quality improvement
- **Planning and development** – targets and timetables, use best available knowledge, knowledgeable policy makers, local service planning
- **Financing** – sustained core operating funds, capital, fees affordable (at most)
- **Human resources** – leadership (all levels), post-secondary ECE training, professional development, good wages, working conditions, system support/staff, recognition
- **Physical environment** – good in- and outdoor spaces and connections, amenities (staff room, kitchen, etc.), good equipment,
- **Data, research and evaluation** – ongoing, used in policy making



# Why a system?

- The ad-hoc, “market” approach we have is neither effective nor equitable.
- Without an ECEC *system*, access to high quality programs is the exception rather than the rule – there’s no example of a country with an ad-hoc market approach that has good access and quality.
- For the system to function well, attention must be paid to all elements. The elements operate as a whole: there is no “magic bullet”.



## In summary..

- Inclusion of children with special needs is part of a socially inclusive approach to ECEC
- For inclusion to function well, need a socially inclusive approach to ECEC
- For social inclusion, need an ECEC *system*, not “the market”, not an ad-hoc patchwork



# Sources

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