

LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Physical activity and disability



For children with a disability, the main barriers to participating in physical activity are often attitudes and assumptions of people around them, rather than the disability itself. Opportunities for inclusion can generally be found when it is assumed that children with a disability have the same right and need to participate in physical activity as other children do. It is also essential that other children in the setting be taught to respect diversity and difference and allow children with disabilities the time and space to participate in physical activities alongside them. Through this learning process, all children become more compassionate and inclusive and everyone can feel a sense of belonging to the group.

When considering physical activity for children with disabilities or developmental delay it is crucial to work in partnership with the child's parents/caregivers, the child themselves, health professionals (such as doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapist etc.) and any other member of the family's service providers to get a clear of idea of what, how and when the child can participate in physical activity.

A process can be developed to assist the child's participation by considering the child's:

- Overall health status
- Activity preferences
- Safety
- Availability of equipment and resources

As well as many structured games, children with disabilities can participate in a range of unstructured movement activities that occur naturally within a regular day such as:

- Collecting rocks, leaves, flowers
- Treasure hunts
- Gardening
- Balancing bodies on huge balls
- Lifting and stacking blocks
- Flying kites
- Using hula hoops
- Dancing
- Chasing bubbles
- Hopscotch
- Hide and Seek
- Swings
- Slides

Inclusion: "involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference." (EYLF, DEEWR, 2009)

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Links to the National Quality Standard (NQS) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

NQS Quality Area 2:

Children's health and safety

NQS Quality Area 3:

Physical environment

NQS Quality Area 6:

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

EYLF Principle 2:

Partnerships

EYLF Principle 3:

High expectations and equity

EYLF Practice:

Responsiveness to children

EYLF Practice:

Learning through play

NQS Standard 2.2:

Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children

EYLF Learning Outcome 1:

Children have a strong sense of identity.
Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

EYLF Learning Outcome 2:

Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Children become aware of fairness

NQS Standard 3.2:

The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play

EYLF Learning Outcome 3:

Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

NQS Element 1.1.5:

Every child is supported to participate in the program

NQS Element 2.2.2:

Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child

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Useful resources:

- Australian Sports Commission have a range of resources, including Game Cards, books and a booklet where teachers talk about their experiences of incorporating inclusive physical activity. Most can be downloaded for free from the following links:
http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/disability/resources/games_and_activities
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/disability/resources/publications>
- Noah's Ark provides Specialist Services for Children with Disabilities and Additional Needs
<http://www.noahsark.net.au/for-childrens-services>

References:

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2013). *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. Retrieved from: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard>

Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Retrieved from: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>