

Coaching & Mentoring CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 9 • February 2026



Our goal is to provide you with practical, inspiring resources to support your work and professional growth in the early learning and child care field.

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of the ECCDC Coaching and Mentoring newsletter.

In the last edition of the Coaching and Mentoring newsletter we explored Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) through the lens of culturally responsive practice and in this edition, we will be continuing the theme of DEI by focusing on **inclusion in early learning and child care**.



Spotlight on Inclusion in Early Learning and Child Care

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is an active, intentional practice of creating respectful, welcoming, and bias-free learning environments that value the unique identities (race, culture, ability, gender) of all children and families, which ensures equitable access of opportunity.

In their practice guidance 'Inclusion for Children with Disabilities' the College of Early Childhood Educators (2019) says that "inclusion and inclusive practices require you, a RECE, to carefully consider the different social contexts and lived experiences of the children, families, and communities with whom they work" (p.5). To find out more about how you can support the full participation of children with disabilities, [click here](#).



Ontario's Ministry of Education *Think Feel Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children* video series, has 3 videos that focus on inclusion. To watch 'Inclusion What is it?', click on the image at left or [here](#).

Definition

Inclusion in Early Learning and Child Care ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs, have equitable access to learning environments where they feel valued and supported. Inclusive education fosters belonging, participation, and engagement, recognizing that diversity enriches learning for all children. Educators play a critical role in creating inclusive environments by implementing adaptations, differentiated teaching strategies, and culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of every child.

Characteristics of Inclusion in Early Learning and Child Care

- The learning environment is welcoming, accessible, and diverse.
- Educators use universal design for learning to accommodate various learning styles.
- Children with disabilities or additional needs receive individualized support.
- Families and communities are actively involved in decision-making and program planning.
- Educators foster a culture of respect, empathy, and collaboration among children.

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Strategies and Tips to Implement Inclusion for Educators and Families

Create an Inclusive Environment: Arrange the classroom to be physically and socially accessible for all children.

Use Differentiated Instruction: Adapt teaching strategies based on children's needs, including sensory supports and alternative communication methods.

Encourage Peer Interactions: Foster relationships and teamwork between children of different abilities and backgrounds.

Professional Development for Educators: Continuous learning on inclusive teaching practices, cultural competency, and special education strategies.

Use Assistive Technology: Incorporate tools that enhance learning accessibility such as visual schedules, speech-to-text applications, or adapted seating.

Document Learning and Progress: Observe and record children's development to identify strengths, address challenges, and celebrate milestones.

Connecting Resources to Support Inclusion in Early Learning and Child Care

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years – highlights the importance of inclusion and belonging in early childhood education. [Click here](#) to access.

Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children – offers research-based insights on fostering inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs. [Click here](#) to access.

Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) – provides a framework for developmentally appropriate practices that support all children. [Click here](#) to access.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) – outlines regulations and guidelines for creating inclusive and accessible learning environments. [Click here](#) to access.

College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice – emphasizes inclusion as a key responsibility for early childhood educators. [Click here](#) to access.

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ECCDC Blogs and Podcasts

If you would like to find out more about supporting inclusion in early learning and child care, check out these ECCDC blogs and podcasts.



[Click here](#) to read ***Nurturing Diversity and Fostering Inclusion: Creating an Enriching and Inclusive Early Learning Environment***



[Click here](#) to listen to ***Resource Consultant Connections with Roisin Derbis***

Upcoming Professional Development with the ECCDC: Focus on Inclusion

How to Get Second Language Learners Talking with Niagara Children's Centre on Tuesday April 21, 2026.

'The 4'S of Authentic Inclusion'. Helping Children with Disabilities Feel Safe and Seen in Early Learning Settings with Lisa Pinhorn on Tuesday September 29, 2026.

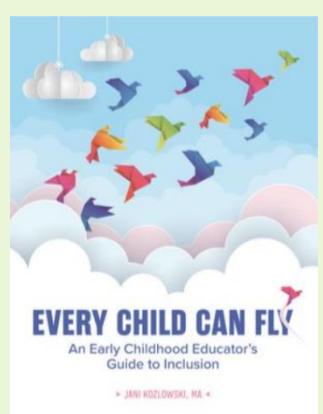
Developing an Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care Community: Strategies for Supporting Inclusive Practices in your Early Learning Environment for Educators and Leaders with Dr. Kathryn Underwood on Saturday October 17, 2026.

[Click here](#) to register for any of the above sessions.

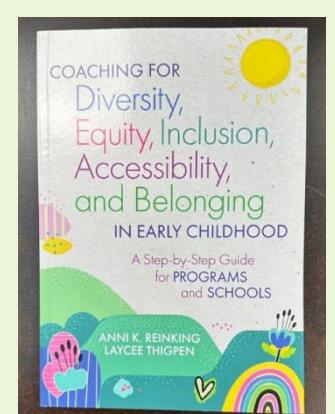
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Supporting Inclusion in Early Learning and Child Care Books and Resources

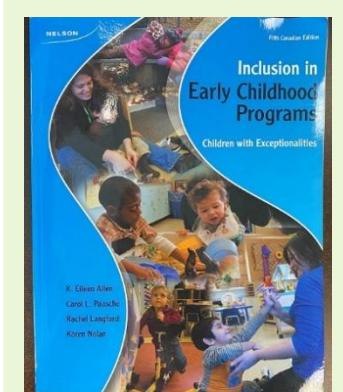
The ECCDC has many books and resources available to borrow from the ECCDC resource lending library. [Click here](#) to search the catalogue for resources to borrow or to purchase from ECCDC's E-Store, [click here](#).



Every Child Can Fly - An Early Childhood Educator's Guide to Inclusion by Jani Kozlowski



Coaching for Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging in Early Childhood - A Step-by-Step Guide for Programs and Schools by Anni K. Reinking, Laycee Thigpen



Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs: Children with Exceptionalities by K. Eileen Allen, Carol L. Paasche, Rachel Langford & Karen Nolan



Provocation for Learning Kit Inclusion Resources and Materials: Helping Children Understand Exceptionalities



Provocation for Learning Kit Inclusion Resources and Materials: Inclusion Starter Kit

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Resource Delivery Service

If you're an ECCDC member located in Niagara, you can take advantage of our free resource delivery service. We'll bring materials right to your program! To learn more or to arrange a delivery, please contact the ECCDC at 905.646.7311 ext. 304 or [email](#) us.



Online Resources



**Five
Moore
- MINUTES -**

Community Playthings Article *Inclusion: Finding a Common Understanding* – [click here](#)

Full Diversity: Meeting the Needs of Young Children with Developmental Delays – [click here](#)

Check out *Five Moore Minutes* YouTube channel where you will find Bite-sized-short videos to support educators on their inclusive journey.



Podcast: *Teaching with Love: Embracing Neurodiversity and Belonging* – [click here](#)

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Focus on the Coaching and Mentoring Team

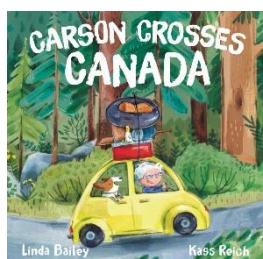
The ECCDC Coaching and Mentoring team facilitated a team meeting for Kids World, which is part of A Child's World, at the ECCDC in Thorold. The evening was kicked off with a networking icebreaker, the *10 Common Threads* game, which sparked a lot of laughter, some fun surprises, and some great discoveries about one another! It was a great way to start their meeting on a positive note and create space for engagement. If you would like to find out more about holding your staff or team meeting at the ECCDC please [click here](#) to email Lorrey Arial Bonilla, Executive Director.



In addition to supporting organizations with team meetings, the ECCDC Coaching and Mentoring team offers customized professional learning opportunities and environmental supports to early learning and child care programs across Ontario. With a fun, hands-on, and collaborative approach, our team supports programs with professional learning, environmental design, curriculum, and pedagogical guidance.

Find out more about our Coaching and Mentoring supports by [clicking here](#) then click on the coaching and mentoring tab. To inquire about customized professional learning opportunities for your program, please email Lorrey Arial Bonilla (email link above).

Attention Licensed Child Care Programs in Niagara!



Literacy is one of the foundational skills that young children develop beginning right from birth. Story Sacks support the development of literacy through providing a storytelling experience with associated props. The props invite additional learning opportunities by inviting children who have not yet learned to read with the materials they need to verbally tell and act out a story. We hope you'll join us for this special opportunity, sponsored by the Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara, to receive a complimentary Story Sack Literacy Kit and Educator Training session!

For additional details, or to register, please scan the QR Code:



We are grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara, and for their ongoing commitment to Niagara's early learning and child care community!



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Coming Soon

The next ECCDC podcast will be released mid-February. We will be in conversation with Jaime Barratt, RECE and we will be talking about how programs can support the development children's Physical Literacy. Keep an eye on your inbox for the release date and link to the conversation with Jaime

The ECCDC podcast is available on [Spotify](#) and [Apple](#) Podcasts! Stay tuned - you won't want to miss these insightful conversations. [Click here](#) to listen to other ECCDC Podcasts



Exciting Professional Learning Opportunity

The ECCDC is excited to welcome bestselling author and motivational coach, Darci Lang, who will be facilitating an in-person and live stream session on Saturday February 28 - *Rewire Your Focus: The 90% Tool for a More Positive Personal and Professional Life*. You can find out more about the session by [clicking here](#). To register for the session, please click [here](#).

Of Interest

You may be interested in the article *Children Who Lead Get the Language They Need!* from The Hanen Centre. This article highlights what it means to follow a child's lead, why it is important, and then goes on to share some practical strategies that can be used to follow the lead of children. Click [here](#) to access the full article. Did you know that the ECCDC offers Hanen training? If you are interested in Hanen training for your program please contact Lorrey Arial Bonilla by [email](#) for further information.

Educator Well Being through Mindfulness

Meditation Practice

The ancient technique of meditation, now backed by modern psychology, offers remarkable benefits for both mind and body. The American Psychological Association highlights studies showing that mindfulness meditation not only changes our brain but also our biology, leading to enhanced mental and physical health.



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Understanding Meditation's Impact

Meditation is more than just a moment of calm; it is a transformative practice that can reshape our daily lives. Regular meditation can reduce stress, improve focus, enhance emotional well-being, and even lead to physical health benefits like lower blood pressure and improved immune response. These changes go beyond temporary relief, offering long-term improvements in how we process emotions, handle stress, and approach our daily lives.

Starting Your Meditation Practice

Choose Your Style: There are many forms of meditation, from guided meditation - which is great for beginners - to more independent practices like mindfulness or concentrative meditation.

Create a Dedicated Space: Find a quiet, comfortable spot for your practice. It does not have to be elaborate – a corner of a room with a cushion or chair can suffice.

Set a Regular Time: Consistency is key. Whether it is first thing in the morning or during a lunch break, find a time that works for you and stick to it.

Begin with Short Sessions: Start with 5-10 minutes and gradually increase as you become more comfortable with the practice.

Use Resources: Plenty of apps and online resources offer guided sessions to help you start and maintain your practice.

Deepening Your Meditation Experience

As you grow more accustomed to meditating, explore different techniques to deepen your practice. Mindfulness meditation encourages you to observe thoughts and sensations without judgment, fostering a deep sense of presence. Concentrative meditation, like focusing on your breath or a mantra, can sharpen your focus and mental clarity.

Incorporating Mindfulness into Daily Life

Beyond your dedicated meditation time, try to incorporate mindfulness into your daily activities. This could be practicing mindful eating, explored in the July 2025 newsletter, where you savour each bite, or mindful walking, where you fully experience each step and your surroundings.

Embracing meditation as part of your life sets a foundation for clarity, peace, and mindfulness. This practice, rooted in ancient tradition and confirmed by modern science, is a key to unlocking a more mindful, healthful, and balanced life.

Bibliography and References

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