# Equity and diversity

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| Anne Stonehouse: | My name is Anne Stonehouse. Welcome to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Principle Video Series. The Framework is for all professionals and services working with children from birth to eight years. In the videos, you see each Practice Principle in action. It's important to remember that all the principles intersect and overlap. Combined, they guide professional practice. |
|  | This video should be used in conjunction with the Practice Principle Guide on Equity and Diversity. The Guide is on the Department of Education and Training website. |
| [00:01:00] | Every child has the right to participate in all aspects of community life. Equity begins with respecting the uniqueness of each child and family. Children and families differ in so many ways. For example culture and language, physical capacity, gender, socio-economic status, living conditions, mental and physical health. |
|  | When professionals are committed to equity, they acknowledge and welcome diversity. This diversity may be in the form of family structure, sexual orientation of family members, circumstances, and culture. Professionals committed to equity consciously avoid practices that directly or indirectly contribute to gender inequality, prejudice, and discrimination. |
|  | Inclusion is the act of acknowledging and catering for diversity and difference, so that all children experience a strong sense of belonging and acceptance as valued members of the group. |
| [00:02:00] | Equity is the result of inclusion, in doing what is necessary to support each child's learning. When children experience acknowledgment of and respect for diversity, their sense of identity becomes stronger. |
|  | Today, we'll be visiting several services. The professionals, families and children at these sites will help you consider equity and diversity and how this relates to your service. |
| Sharyn Veale: | Everybody is given a fair go and is able to achieve or be supported in achieving anything that they wish to do so in after-school care. We have a lot of conversations with children about diversity, but for our community, most of it doesn't seem to be around culture. It seems to be around just the differences between people. |
| Simone Timmnis:[00:03:00] | There's a great picture where there's three children that stand on equal size crate and another three children who stand on different sized crates, but depending on what they need so the children end up at the same level, able to see over the fence. It just points out the difference between providing for people equally, or giving people what they need to give them equal opportunity. |
| Denise Barr: | We try and do some fundraising to enable the children who can't afford excursions to make sure that they can attend excursions. We use State Schools' Relief a lot so that the children are in uniform the same as all the other children. Equity is giving the children, or every child, the opportunity to reach their full potential. |
| [00:04:00] | Students who are on the program for students with disabilities are treated no differently to any of the children in the school. There are expectations that they work alongside the other children in the classroom. They will work in small groups, they will work individually with education support staff, or they will work in the class as a whole. If you walked in to a classroom, I'm sure you would have difficulty recognising who the children were on the program with students with disabilities. |
| Anne Stonehouse: | Equity is not about providing something off to the side for the child who is different, or providing exactly the same thing for every child. Rather, it requires professionals to plan with other professionals and practicing ways that enable all children to participate and engage fully. |
|  | A commitment to equity means that professionals consciously avoid practices and assumptions that directly or indirectly contribute to inequality, prejudice, and discrimination. |
| Marlene Fox:[00:05:00] | When we think about including children with additional needs and disabilities, it's far more than just having access to services, but that's a starting point. You can't be included in a program or an experience or a setting if you're not actually allowed to have access to that service. So that's a starting point. |
|  | It's also more than just being in the room. It's not about just being present. It's about actually being included, and that means having a program that actually enables the child to participate fully, to be treated equitably with their peers, to have opportunities within those settings, and that sometimes means providing additional resources or providing a very personalised program or really looking at what needs to be done so that that child can be included in all aspects of their learning and development within that setting. |
| Joanne Richmond:[00:06:00] | There's about 39 different ethnic backgrounds, so it is diversity in itself, and it's about working with families and communities so that we can all work together I think in giving people the skills and the opportunities and the learnings so that we can function as a society. So I guess what I look at it is the children here, that they're practicing the skills we want in society where it doesn't matter what background you come from. It doesn't matter what your family can do. We all together are Australian, no matter whether we're from a Vietnamese background or whether we're from an African background, but we are Australian, but we are diverse. |
|  | One of those things that we have to consider at school is wearing headscarves. Children from other backgrounds may not wear headscarves, but it is part of that tradition, and we need to respect those families. So say when you're going swimming, it can be what do the girls need to do to be able to join in the swimming program like the other children? It's just really simple things that they need to just go to the change room just to change separately in their own cubicle, just to be respectful of their religion. There's just small things I think sometimes that can make a big difference. |
| [00:07:00]Anne Stonehouse: | Professionals reinforce the value of all Australian children, knowing about the contemporary cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Professionals have a responsibility to advocate for equity and challenge inequitable practices, including gender inequality, prejudice, and discrimination. |
|  | The importance of encouraging children to learn to respect diversity and difference weaves through the fabric of every level of service operation. It is not an add-on. |
| Janani Nathan: | A little bit of the Australian history and who are the first people - by reading story books we learned it. It helps the children to understand that it's a way of showing our respect. It's just the way the children to understand and have this journey together, learning indigenous culture and how to care for the land while promoting sustainability. |
| [00:08:00]Emma Buckler: | We've got one child in particular in our kindergarten year this year who's got two mums, and so she has sort of... at the start of the year, a lot of the children were quite confused by this. She wasn't excluded as such, but a lot of people saying, "Where's your dad?" And asking her questions like that, and she would just simply say, "I don't have a dad." We would then talk to the group about how all families come in all different shapes and sizes, just like people, and how in everyday life no one's the same and everyone's different. Some people have older brothers, younger sisters, some people have no siblings, some people have two mums, some have two dads, so just ensuring that the children learn how many different ways there are of families and ensuring that we provide an unbiased approach to our children. |
| Anne Stonehouse:[00:09:00] | Children's attitudes and values about diversity and difference are shaped by the attitudes and values of important adults in their lives. Children learn about equity and diversity when professionals model fairness, inclusion, and respect for diversity. |
| Sharyn Veale: | It's not always based around it being somebody looking different for a cultural reason, but it's just that we all have different eye colour, we have different hair colour, we have different skin colour. One of those was we were watching the Commonwealth Games a couple of years ago, and one of the weightlifters... we were talking about the countries being the same uniforms between Australia and South Africa. One of the children commented about the fact that because a particular guy who was in Australian colours was quite dark-skinned, that he couldn't be an Australian competitor. We talked about how we were all very different, and that when we started looking at some of the other sports, there was quite a diverse … between different people. |
| Emma Buckler:[00:10:00] | In this kindergarten, even though there's not many children of different cultures, we still choose to celebrate Chinese New Year, set up environments to talk about these sort of things, display things, really teach them about the Aboriginal culture, teach the children all about the different cultures that there are, and ensuring even though they don't see a lot of it in this community, that they're aware that it's out there. |
| Anne Stonehouse: | Professionals aim for every child and family to experience a sense of belonging, to be included, and see themselves as valued members of the group and the community. Striving for equity and enacting respect for diversity and difference are essential to providing high-quality services for young children. |