

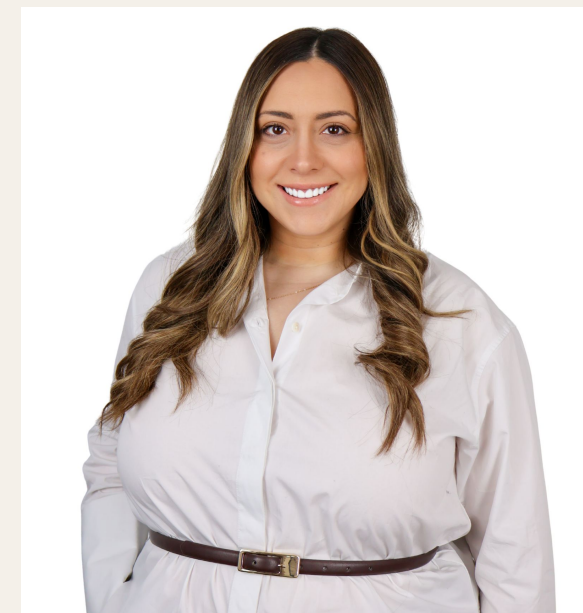
September, 2026

Research Snapshot No. 28

*Supporting the inclusion of young children in
childcare settings through professional
development: perceptions of educators and
managers*

Dionne et al. 2025

In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



***Presented by Talia Pulis,
Speech Pathologist***

What do you need to know?

Inclusive practice happens throughout the everyday ECEC experience

- Inclusion extends beyond physical placement to participation, belonging, relationships, learning and development.
- Educators create learning opportunities through play, routines, interactions and the environment.
- Professional learning may be more useful when educators can apply new knowledge, receive feedback and reflect on their practice.
- Coaching provides repeated, individualised support within the educator's work context.
- This study examined participants' perceptions. It did not test whether the program improved educator practice or child outcomes.

What is this research about?

How did educators and managers perceive a year of professional development for inclusion?

The researchers explored:

- what educators and managers believed they had learned;
- the skills they believed they had developed;
- their experience of professional development and coaching; and
- their use of the French AEPS-3/ÉIS-3 assessment and intervention system.

The study formed part of a seven-year action-research partnership involving 19 organisations in Quebec, Canada.

What did the researchers do?

A 10-month professional-development program in eight Quebec childcare centres

- Qualitative study involving 14 educators and 6 managers
- Two online training modules totalling three hours
- Training introduced:
 - the AEPS-3/ÉIS-3 curriculum-based assessment system; and
 - Activity-Based Intervention
- Educators received an average of six individual two-hour coaching sessions
- Coaching included video, reflection, feedback and action planning
- Managers received coaching focused on leadership and organisational support
- Participants completed 60 to 75-minute interviews at the end of the program
- Researchers used thematic content analysis to examine interview and field notes

What did the researchers find?

Participants perceived changes in observation, planning and inclusive practice

Educators reported:

- more precise observation of children's development;
- stronger links between observation and planning;
- greater use of routines, play and group activities as learning opportunities;
- a broader understanding of developmental differences across all children; and
- increased confidence and awareness of their professional role.

Educators and managers reported:

- coaching conversations were particularly valuable;
- video supported reflection but could initially feel intimidating;
- the AEPS-3/ÉIS-3 supported planning and shared language but required considerable time; and
- leadership, staffing, protected time and shared responsibility influenced implementation.

How can you use this research?

Professional learning needs support for implementation

- Connect observation and assessment directly with everyday planning.
- Embed learning opportunities within play, routines and group activities.
- Use coaching to support reflection, feedback and action planning over time.
- Build on educators' existing strengths and preserve their ownership of practice.
- Involve managers in professional learning and implementation planning.
- Develop shared language and priorities across ECEC and ECI teams.
- Plan for workload, protected time, staffing and ongoing coaching support.

These are practice implications informed by participants' experiences. The study did not test program effectiveness.

How does this research align with the Framework?

- **Ecologically-based and Everyday Settings**
Learning opportunities were embedded within ordinary ECEC activities and routines.
- **Participation**
Inclusion was understood as participation, belonging, relationships and learning.
- **Strengths-based and Diversity-affirming**
Educators considered each child's individual developmental profile and reflected on their own existing strengths.
- **Evidence-informed and Outcomes-focused**
Assessment information was connected with goal selection, planning and progress monitoring.
- **Community-focused and Collaborative Practice**
The model aimed to strengthen educator and manager capability within the ECEC setting.

Where to from here?

Perceived benefit needs to be tested against practice and outcomes

Future research should investigate:

- independently observed changes in educator practice;
- implementation fidelity and the contribution of each program component;
- effects on children's participation, belonging, relationships and learning;
- child and family perspectives and outcomes;
- whether changes continue after coaching ends;
- whether learning spreads beyond directly coached educators;
- the cost and resources required for implementation; and
- feasibility within different ECEC systems, including Australia.

The findings cannot be assumed to transfer directly from Quebec to Australian ECEC settings.

About the researchers

The researchers were based in the Department of Psychoeducation at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Canada.

All six authors were affiliated with the university's:

UNESCO Chair in Early Childhood and Inclusive Early Intervention

Several authors were also affiliated with a Quebec research team examining the conditions that support quality inclusion in early childhood.

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