

Steps to inclusion

From rehabilitative day care center to partial inclusion in the community

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S. a girl from Amnon and Tamar's kindergarten in Ra'anana: "I drew a picture
"...of a girl with a walker and two girls helping her



Beit Issie Shapiro

Changing the lives of people with disabilities

On the Willie & Celia Trump Campus



**The model described in this booklet was developed at Beit Issie Shapiro's
Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center**

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Introduction

The vision of Beit Issie Shapiro is to work for a society that guarantees children and adults with varied disabilities the right to maximum opportunity for growth and participation in the life of the community. We therefore attribute great importance to creating inclusion programs from early childhood, in the belief that the child and the family are part of a community, and have the right to take part in the life of the community in which they live, and enjoy its services. We see the rehabilitation daycare center as a stage in the life of the family, an initial starting point for the family's journey of raising a child with disabilities. At the same time, we do not forget that the family lives in a community, and even if the child leaves it during the week, he / she returns on the weekends, and is part of the community together with the other children in the family. Hence the importance that we see in creating a connection between the child, the family and the community from a very young age. We feel a sense of joint responsibility to ensure that the child and his/her family can integrate in the community, according to their needs and abilities.

Based on this approach, The Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center at Beit Issie Shapiro holds a variety of inclusion programs, affording different levels of exposure to the regular environment. These include a reverse inclusion program, group inclusion, and individual inclusion in the communities of origin.

The purpose of this booklet is to present the models of inclusion that exist at the Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center , and to give those who are interested the tools for building similar programs. The booklet has four chapters: The first chapter contains a theoretical review of mainstreaming in general, and mainstreaming in early childhood in particular; the second chapter describes inclusion at Beit Issie Shapiro; the third chapter includes various models for inclusion; and the fourth chapter relates to specific issues, such as successes, challenges and dilemmas in the different types of inclusion processes. The last part of the booklet contains appendices intended to help build inclusion programs.



Theoretical background and central concepts

Inclusion is a concept that expresses the opposite of segregation. Inclusion gives people with disabilities equal obligations and rights, and allows them to be socially involved, active and contributing members of the community. The inclusion process is intended to realize the potential of personal participation for each individual in the mainstream of his/her culture. Mainstreaming is a continuation of the idea of inclusion in education, meaning a mingling of students coming from different groups in a heterogeneous school and a heterogeneous class. With regard to students with disabilities, the purpose of mainstreaming is to educate these students among their peers, children of the same age, learning in the typical education framework, so as to allow them to develop social relationships with each other (Wolfensberger, 1972).

There are two main approaches to full inclusion in the education system:

- a. **Mainstreaming at any price:** Including children with all kinds of disabilities in typical education classes. This means the inclusion of every student in regular frameworks, taking into account their special needs and creating all the conditions to help them achieve autonomy, functional independence, and quality of life, according to their needs and wishes.
- b. **Mainstreaming wherever possible:** Underlying this approach is the view that the system has to provide children and students with disabilities the optimal environment for learning and development, along the continuum between a unique framework and a fully integrated framework. The guiding principle is an examination of each individual case, looking at the intellectual potential and learning ability of the child, his/her independence and functioning in everyday life, his/her personality, and his/her capability for social communication. All of these are taken into account, together with an examination of the child's unique needs and the optimal environment for him/her.

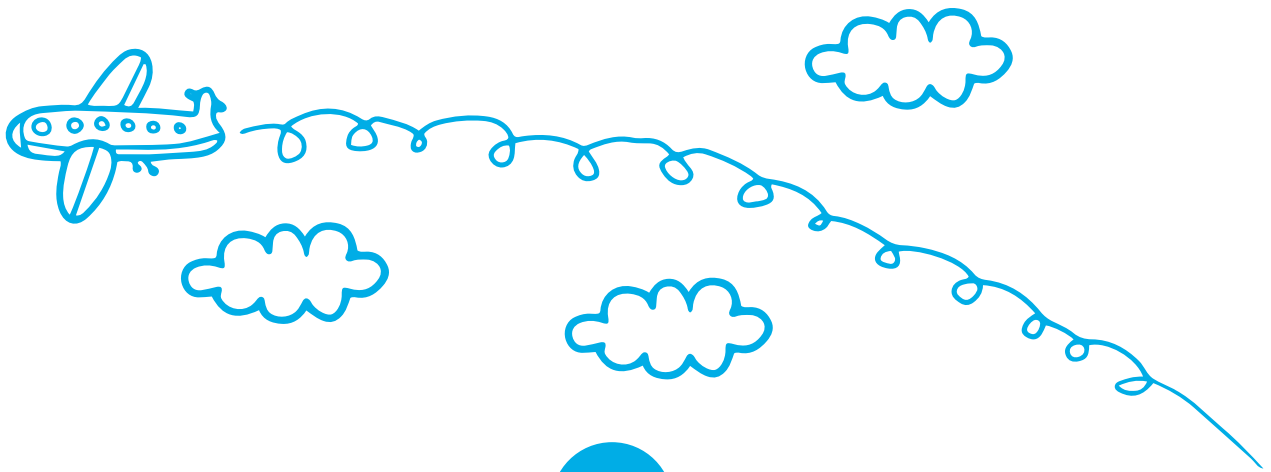
Mainstreaming has two main objectives:

- a. The participation of children with disabilities together with children without disabilities allows them to be socially active and accepted as equal partners in the group (Kaminsky and Shapiro, 2011).
- b. "Typical" children who are engaged in activities with children with disabilities acquire habits of assistance, openness, patience and tolerance. Coming into contact with different children



promotes the ability of "typical" children to function in a heterogeneous society, limits stigmas and negative stereotypes, creates positive opinions with regard to the "other," and develops insights that help in coping with differences (Chen, Shulman & Hed, 1990).

In recent years, with a lowering of the age of diagnosis and the increasing need to build frameworks for early intervention, the number of programs for the inclusion of very young children with disabilities in typical frameworks have increased. From the research studies that have examined the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion in early childhood, a complex picture arises. Some of the studies present very positive findings with regard to the contribution of inclusion of toddlers with disabilities to their cognitive, behavioral and emotional functioning, and have also found that children who participated in an early inclusion program functioned better even at the age of 4 - 6 (Parker, Corona & Cahn 2013; Stahmer, Akshoomoff & Cunningham, 2011). However, other studies found significant disadvantages to integrating children in early childhood, such as the social isolation of the child with disabilities, and the provision of partial and unsatisfactory effective solutions by comparison to those given by the special framework (Klein and Sobelman-Rosenthal, 2010). There are a number of models for inclusion in early childhood, the differences between them being a consequence of the number of integrated children in the kindergarten, the duration of inclusion over the week, and the make-up of the group of integrated children.





Early childhood inclusion programs at Beit Issie Shapiro

A variety of programs are in operation at Beit Issie Shapiro's Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center. The Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center is an educational and rehabilitation center for children aged 0 -3 with developmental disabilities, and their families. The underlying professional concept is to operate a family-focused center. This is based on the understanding that the toddler's family - parents, siblings and grandparents - is his/her primary and most significant environment. The center and its staff work in accordance with the trans-disciplinary model that sees the child as whole, unique and special, and allows his/her needs and his/her development to be studied. Underlying the work of the staff is the belief that every child has the ability to develop and play an active and enjoyable part in his/her natural environment, in a professional environment adapted to his/her needs. The guiding principle is that early intervention is vital and significant for the child and his/her family, and makes it possible for him/her to have a better quality of life.

A number of programs at the Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center offer children different levels of exposure to the typical environments: partial inclusion in the home community, group inclusion in an early childhood kindergarten in the central region, and reverse inclusion. At the same time, all the inclusion programs have the same objectives and principles:

Objectives of the inclusion programs

- Adjustment and coping with a changing, dynamic and unexpected environments.
- Exposure to a range of age-appropriate stimuli and contents.
- Providing opportunities for experiencing contact with children of the same age, and building meaningful social interactions in an inclusive environment.
- Exposure to peers without disabilities that will provide a role model and reinforce linguistic, communication, social, and motor skills.
- Implementing methods of communication and play in a normative environment.
- Creating a continuum in which each child can enjoy a typical environment in a way that is adapted to his/her needs.
- Creating an infrastructure for positive attitudes in the community - encouraging values of respect for every individual and respect for the "other."



Principles of building an inclusion program

In order to allow all children to participate and interact, we must ensure adjustments and support at all levels: (1) adaptation of the physical environment; (2) adaptation of the content of the activity; (3) personal adaptation; (4) adaptation of the social environment.

1. Adaptation of the physical environment

The physical environment and the way in which it is organized affect the way in which the child tries out, experiences and acts, as well as the nature of his/her play, the atmosphere in the kindergarten, and the interactions created among the children.

The following points should be related to when arranging the environment:

- The number of stimuli and their organization in different corners of the kindergarten
- Seating
- The child's position during the activity
- Lighting
- Control over the intensity of audio stimuli

2. The nature of the activity in the kindergarten, and the choice of content

Children attending partial inclusion programs are not involved in the way in which the kindergarten operates, the daily routine, the content studied, and the things that have taken place during the course of the week, and so planning the nature and content of the activity must relate to the following points:

- The choice of an appropriate day of the week for inclusion in the kindergarten
- The kindergarten staff, transitions and activities
- Norms and rules of the including kindergarten
- Adapting the content studied and making it accessible by various means



3. Personal adaptation

In order to allow optimal inclusion in the kindergarten and enable participation, it is necessary to look at unique adaptations for the child, in accordance with his/her wishes, needs and abilities, while relating to the therapeutic and personal objectives defined for him/her.

Principles for personal adaptation:

- Adapting the communicative-linguistic environment
- Offering choice
- Adapting the nature of the game to the child's abilities and interests
- Adapting to the child's learning style
- Adapting the level of mediation required, at different stages and times, in different activities, and by different figures
- Teaching the social skills that are essential for interaction with the surroundings

4. Social accessibility

In order to reduce the risk of development of negative attitudes and rejection, we have to create an infrastructure for social inclusion, acceptance and sharing. Below are a number of ways of creating a kindergarten climate supporting inclusion:

- Working on similarity and difference between human beings
- Explaining about the abilities and difficulties of people with disabilities in general, and the included child in particular
- Explaining about alternative ways of communicating with people with disabilities, and ways of communicating with the included child
- Increasing awareness of difference through the design of the environment (pictures, play corners, etc.)
- Encouraging interaction and social relations among children



Models for inclusion in the early childhood center

In this section, we present models of inclusion that are applied in the early intervention center: (1) partial inclusion in the home community; (2) reverse inclusion; (3) partial group inclusion.

1. Partial inclusion in the home community

The model of partial inclusion in the home community takes place in the child's home environment. The family and the child get to know families and children from the area, and are exposed to normative social encounters, such as playing in the playground, celebrating birthdays, and so on.

In this model, a group of children with disabilities from the Aaron De Lowe Early Intervention Center join regular kindergartens in the community in which they live.

The children go to the kindergartens for one or two days a week throughout the year, accompanied by an assistant or student, and join in the activities.

Since this model involves children with disabilities, children without disabilities, the parents of both groups of children, staff members, and entities in the community, it is of the greatest importance to set up unique objectives and work processes for each of the partners.

Program structure

The program for partial inclusion in the home community relates to 3 periods of time in the course of the year's activities: (a) Pre-inclusion, including preparatory activities for all the entities involved; (b) inclusion; (c) close of the inclusion.

a. Pre-inclusion

- Identifying the children who are suited to the program, according to the following criteria:
 - Potential for continued inclusion of the child in a regular framework
 - The parents' attitudes towards inclusion
 - How long the child has been in the special education kindergarten
 - The budgetary resources of the special education kindergarten / local authority
- Identifying kindergartens in the community, and applying to the relevant authorities
- Enlisting accompanying and support personnel, and preparing them for the program
- Visit by the staff of the special education kindergarten to the inclusive kindergarten, and meeting with the kindergarten teacher
- Group meeting for the parents of the children to be included
- Preparatory meeting with the support staff accompanying the children being included
- Meeting between the parents and the staff of the inclusive kindergarten



b. Inclusion

In the course of the year's activities, there is training and support for all the participants in the inclusion process:

- **The children being included:** preparation for inclusion should take place close to the start of the program, and throughout the year, to check the suitability of the kindergarten environment and content to the changing needs of the child. In addition, it is necessary to work with the child on the experience of inclusion, using his/her different means of communication, as well as information from the parents and the assistant.
- **The children in the inclusive kindergarten:** Preparation for inclusion should be carried out before the new child joins the kindergarten, giving a natural description of his strengths and, as necessary, relating in a delicate way to his/her difficulties / aids, and ways of communicating with him/her. In addition, during and after the inclusion day, the children should be allowed to express the thoughts and feelings arising from the encounter.
- **The parents of the included child:** Maintaining regular communication with the families throughout the year of inclusion. In addition, group accompaniment meetings are held at the start of the process, in the middle, and at its conclusion.
- **The parents of the children in the inclusive kindergarten:** Preparing the parents of the children in the inclusive kindergarten takes place in a number of ways, in accordance with the kindergarten teacher's approach: announcement by the kindergarten teacher that the kindergarten is an inclusive kindergarten, conversation with the parents' committee, explanation of the program during parent activities, and meeting with the parents of the included child. During the inclusion year: encouraging the parents to be involved in the inclusion process, by making a connection between the included child and his/her family and the other children of the kindergarten, by various means
- **The staff accompanying the child during inclusion:** Providing training and tools, after observation in the inclusive environment. In addition, holding group staff meetings for the integrators, enabling learning, discussion and bringing up dilemmas.
- **The staff of the inclusive kindergarten:** Regular contact between the kindergarten teachers of the special education kindergarten and the inclusive kindergarten, for passing on information, training, and bringing up dilemmas of the staff. In addition, group meetings are held for all the



inclusive staff members on the following issues:

1. Familiarity with the world of disabilities
2. The world of the families coping with raising a child with disabilities
3. Sharing the inclusion experience - support, success and challenges.

c. Close of inclusion

Towards the end of the year, various processes are held to enable the inclusion process to be concluded and summed up for each of the partners:

- **Children (included and inclusive)** - preparation for parting by means of conversations, planning a parting process with the kindergarten teacher: preparing a farewell activity / gift / picture etc.
- **Parents of the included child:** Joint summary conversation between the parents and the staff and the assistant in the special education kindergarten.
- **Parents in the inclusive kindergarten:** Informing them of the parting process.
- **The staff accompanying the child during inclusion:** Summary briefing on the inclusion process of each of the children.
- **The staff of the inclusive kindergarten:** Group summary meeting for all the partners in the process.
- **Feedback questionnaires:** Every year, feedback questionnaires on the program are given out to all the partners.

2. Reverse inclusion

The reverse inclusion program takes place in a special education kindergarten, where a group of children from a regular kindergarten and their kindergarten teacher / assistant come and take part in a weekly joint hands-on activity in the special kindergarten. The program is intended for children who can benefit from exposure to children without disabilities, but still need this activity to take place in a familiar and protected framework.



Program structure

Pre-inclusion

- Identifying a suitable kindergarten for the program, relating to criteria such as proximity, the attitude of the kindergarten teacher, and permission from the supervising entities.
- Identifying the children who are suitable for the program in emotional and social terms in the special kindergarten and the inclusive kindergarten, and receiving the parents' consent to their participation in the activities.
- Preparing the parents in both kindergartens, by means of parent meetings to provide information and present the program, its objectives, and its contribution to the children.
- Preparing the children in both kindergartens, by means of a conversation about the anticipated activity, and showing pictures of the friends they will be meeting, and their names.
- Preparing the staff in both kindergartens: giving an explanation about the program and the structure of the activity, the mediation of the staff members, and the division of roles.

Inclusion

a. **Planning the reverse inclusion meetings:** The two kindergarten teachers are jointly involved in planning, which includes building an orderly program of meetings according to the content expected to be taught in the kindergartens. The meetings are planned according to the following model: whole group activity, activity in small groups, and independent play in the kindergarten corners and yard.

Planning the activity relates to the following principles:

- **The structure and content of the activity:** When structuring the activity, it is important to keep to a fixed time and physical environment. In addition, the activity should be structured in terms of type of activity and division of time. The content chosen for the inclusion activity must be hands-on, enjoyable, creative, challenging, and in particular, include activities encouraging contact and cooperation between the children. The activity and the content must be suitable for a mixed population of children with different abilities and different levels of functioning. It is desirable to include activities in which children with disabilities have an advantage.
- **Preparing for the activity:** It is important to prepare the children in the special kindergarten ahead of the activity, by early exposure to the content of the meeting.

- **Use of positive reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement for the children in the two groups is likely to increase the sense of efficacy, and promote the motivation for joint activities. The children receive reinforcement for every expression of connection and cooperation.
- **Processing the encounter:** conversations are held with the children after the meeting, using different forms of communication. The conversations enable the children to express and talk about their feelings, about the activity, what they enjoyed and what they disliked. In addition, processing is carried out with the staff, at the joint staff meetings, and at meetings of the kindergarten teachers of both kindergartens. The intervention processes are decided in accordance with the content raised.

Close of inclusion

- **Summary activity:** Similar to the summary of the partial inclusion program in the home community, there is a process of parting from the children and the staff, including planning a farewell activity with the children, and summary with the staff.

3. Partial group inclusion

In the partial group inclusion model, a small group of children from the special kindergarten go to the nearby kindergarten for a specific integrated activity. The activity takes place once a week, and lasts between two hours and half a day.

This model is an intermediate point on the continuum between inclusion in the home community and reverse inclusion. The children chosen to participate in this activity are ready to leave the kindergarten on a limited basis, for a new environment and a social meeting with children of their age group, but at the same time they need their familiar carer and group to be with them throughout the activity. In this model, the principles of reverse inclusion are maintained, but the activity itself takes place in the inclusive special kindergarten.



the principles of reverse inclusion but the activity itself takes place in the inclusive special kindergarten and not in the



The contribution of the program to the children, their parents, and the staff

Below is a selection of quotes illustrating the contribution to all the partners of the inclusion programs at the De Lowe Early Intervention Center.

- **Quotes by parents:** *"For us, the overall view that our daughter Tamar was first of all a child, but also a daughter, granddaughter, and a member of the community, was very important. It was of importance not only in terms of Tamar's development and experiences as a child with the same rights as any other child, but also in terms of our coping, as a family, with a child with disabilities. Coping with regard to the outside world - the community in which we live, and also inwardly - we ourselves, and how we see ourselves. The past year has been a very emotional and powerful experience for us. We were happy and excited to take Tamar to kindergarten every Friday, and to see her happy, playing, trying to imitate, enjoying and loved. The idea of inclusion is so natural on the face of it, but at the same time so different and revolutionary, and this is its power and its strength" (mother of a child in the inclusion program).*
- **Kindergarten teachers of included children:** *"S., a little girl with difficulty in planning movements, suddenly insists on getting into the sandbox on her own, and trying to jump on the mattress with her friends. M. insists on swinging on the swing with no support, asks me to go away, and only agrees that Yoav, the hunky guy of the kindergarten, should swing her. And D., who so resists new tastes and will only eat dry food, tastes tuna for the first time, looks at the kindergarten teacher, and asks for more..."*
- **Kindergarten teachers of inclusive children:** *"We saw children encouraging a little boy who was making an effort to climb onto the slide, standing at the bottom of the slide and calling out in encouragement, and others insisted on the right of the child whose voice was not being heard. For example, when Y. put his hand up and I did not see it, the children called out to me: 'Y. has his hand up, he wants to say something!' "*



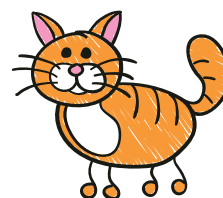
• *"I see that there are sensitive children who adjust themselves to G.'s pace, wait for him to finish eating, slowly, adjust to their pace of walking to his, and even argue among themselves about who will sit next to him, and they have even invented a game of football, shuffling on their bottoms so that G. can take part in the game."*

• **The staff of the special education kindergarten on what they have learned from the process:** "For us, inclusion is a mirror and supervisor of our perceptions with regard to how much we mediate and enable. I see a significant difference between the way the child functions in the therapeutic kindergarten and in inclusion. This leads to a change in objectives and working methods in the therapeutic kindergarten."

• **The staff of the inclusive kindergarten:** "At first I had concerns, I did not know what to expect, but the first day 'broke the ice'.

I feel that we, as a team, learn from the children coming to the inclusion process - how to approach them, talk to them, and allow them to try things on their own, without suffocating them."

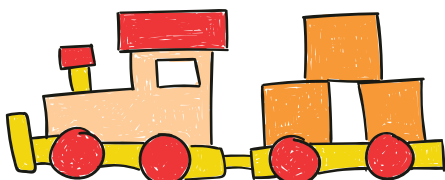






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“Beit Issie Shapiro” Changing the lives of people with disabilities.
Established 35 years ago and a national and global model, our organization strives to ensure that people with disabilities are fully integrated in community life and have a better quality of life. As a center of excellence, we develop innovative educational and therapeutic services, change attitudes towards people with disabilities and create social change and conduct research and training in the field of disabilities.

Beit Issie Shapiro received consultative status on disabilities from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2012.



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