



Inclusion Support Program – What is the role of the additional educator?

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MYTH

The additional educator is employed to provide 1:1 support for a child in the care environment.

TRUTH

The additional educator is employed to raise the staff to child ratio, above the national requirement, to support quality practice and inclusion of all children in the space.

The Inclusion Support Programme (ISP) is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. It aims to support education and care services build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs. One way that this is achieved is through the provision of funding to services towards the cost of employing an additional educator when they have a child enrolled with a disability, or undergoing assessment for a disability.

Funding applications are assessed by the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM). Eligibility requirements and subsidy limits apply. For more information about accessing funding, talk to your local Inclusion Professional or visit www.viac.com.au.

Although a funding application is triggered by a service having a child with a disability or undergoing assessment enrolled in the service, the role of the additional educator is to support the inclusion of all children in the care environment. They work as an integrated part of the team.

What does the additional educator do?

- ✓ The Additional Educator is employed as an extra member of the team to increase the number of educators in the care environment when a child with high support needs is attending
- ✓ The Additional Educator works as a member of the team, sharing the daily work and responsibilities to support the participation of all children in all aspects of the program
- ✓ The work of the Additional Educator will look similar to the roles of other educators in the room. They will interact with all children and provide support to individual children when needed, including the child with high support needs, as will all educators.

What does the additional educator not do?

- ✗ The Additional Educator is not solely responsible for a child with high support needs, or for providing ongoing one to one support
- ✗ The Additional Educator does not have the primary relationship with the child's family, including key responsibility for communicating with the family
- ✗ The Additional Educator cannot provide medical or nursing assistance to a child, or provide early intervention therapy
- ✗ The Additional Educator cannot be used to release educators from the care environment for programming and planning purposes, or for training and meetings.

* Extract from Inclusion Development Fund Fact Sheet – The Role of the Additional Educator www.idfm.org.au

Services utilise their additional educator in a range of different ways, depending on the context of the service, and what is needed to address barriers to inclusion. Here is how two of Community Child Care Association's members are using their funded additional educators!

Shirley Robertson Children's Centre – Tina Papa Centre Director

Shirley Robertson Children's Centre in Coburg has utilised their funding for an additional educator to provide a high quality inclusive program by:

- Supporting children during stress triggers and transitions
- Reaching specific goals so children can fully participate and enjoy the program
- Building social skills to help develop friendships and practice pro-social behaviour
- Implementing small group activities
- Supporting all children to develop their resilience and conflict resolution skills.

“Having an additional educator in our Penguin room has enabled us to divide our 28 children into small groups to discuss and explore intentional teaching themes. It has also created a safer environment by enabling greater supervision, thus allowing a free flowing indoor/outdoor program. The additional educator has strengthened our already quality program by allowing spontaneous extension of children’s interest. Having an additional educator has also allowed us the time to have all important discussions with families at drop off and pick up times, fostering relationships with carers and families.”

Moreland City Council School Holiday Program – Suzan George, Coordinator

Moreland City Council School Holiday Program runs four Vacation care programs. They currently include 18 children with additional needs and have a number of funded additional educators employed across these programs.

"Having an additional worker in the environment allowed us to operate effectively and safely. Children were well settled in, had fun and enjoyed their school holidays. Additional support in the environment helped maximise children's participation in excursions and incursions."

Educators had the time to establish and apply appropriate guidelines that encourage positive behaviour, educators could guide and supervise activities and implement daily routines in an unhurried manner and ensure that all possible precautions are taken to avoid accidents.

Educators were also able to communicate effectively with families on arrival and departures.

Educators had the opportunity to run small group activities to encourage positive interactions amongst peers. Educators were able to support children with their communication skills by using visual aids, picture communication & gestural prompts to avoid situations where children can suffer stress and anxiety. They managed to implement strategies and role model positive behaviour in an unhurried way to achieve positive outcomes for all, and adequately supervise and assist children at meal times/nappy/toileting times to keep all children safe especially children in wheelchairs who have limited mobility.

Additional support in the environment allowed for more indoor and outdoor activities. Educators were able to offer choices and allow children the opportunity to find quiet areas when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Educators commented that they were less stressed, had the opportunity to research more activities for children and appreciated that they had the time to communicate with families in an unhurried manner.

All children are happy to come back, we have had children using the programs since they were five and they still continue enjoying the program."

An additional educator can give services the opportunity to implement a range of practices to support all children. Building your service's inclusive practices takes time and commitment from all educators. There's a range of different avenues for support that your Inclusion Professional can explore with you, to identify the most effective and efficient strategies for your service. The strategies necessary to build your service's capacity are likely to vary between different teams, so having regular engagement with your Inclusion Professional will help you assess what the best options are for each team at different stages of their inclusion journey.

Applying for an additional educator may be the most suitable option to build your service's inclusive capacities, but it is essential that you discuss all options with your Inclusion Professional before beginning an application. You can find the contact details for your local Victorian Inclusion Agency team at www.viac.com.au.

