



The Japanese Practice of Mimamoru and Lessons on Inclusion

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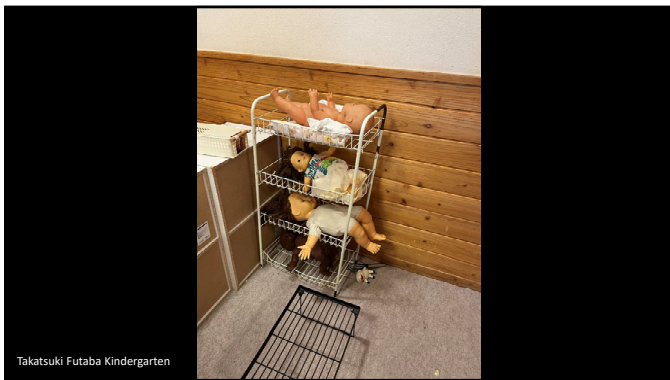
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2



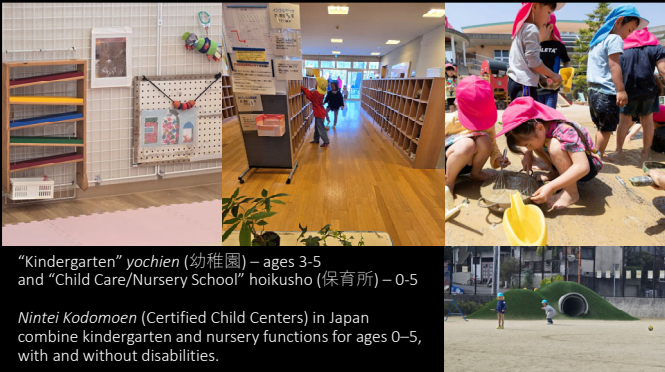
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Study of ECTA Inclusion Indicators in Japan

In partnership with Ryutaro Shintani, professor at the Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts in Kyoto, Japan

1. How does the physical learning environment foster inclusion? Do practitioners structure the learning environment in ways that align with elements within the **Physical Environment indicator (E1)**?
2. How do practitioners promote children's autonomy and child-centered practices? How are practices aligned with the elements within the **Child Autonomy and Child-Centered Practices indicator (E2)**?
3. How do practitioners promote meaningful interactions with peers? How are practices aligned with the elements within the **Meaningful Interactions with Peers indicator (E5)**?
4. What alignment exists generally between inclusive early education in Japan and the United States model of inclusive early education as reflected in the indicators?
5. What are systemic barriers to implementation and potential solutions?


4



"Kindergarten" *yochien* (幼稚園) – ages 3-5 and "Child Care/Nursery School" *hoikusho* (保育所) – 0-5

Nintei Kodomoen (Certified Child Centers) in Japan combine kindergarten and nursery functions for ages 0–5, with and without disabilities.

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Tonda certified Kodomoen, Takatsuki City

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Overview of the Support System for Young Children with Disabilities in Japan

—Growing Up Together: Building an Inclusive Society—

TRACK 1: Mainstream Early Childhood Settings (Inclusive Settings)
Children with disabilities can attend these settings with additional support as needed.

TRACK 2: Disability-Specific Outpatient Services (Specialized Support)
Implemented by municipalities under the Child Welfare Act.

TRACK 3: Bridging and Itinerant Services
Bridging: Connects children with disabilities to mainstream settings. Itinerant: Provides services at home.

TRACK 4: Foundation of Special Support Education (Economic Support Functions)
Support and consultation for ECCE settings. Development support. Collaboration with medical, welfare, and other services. Provision of materials, equipment, and resources, etc.

Key Features of the System: "Dual Enrollment"
Allows children with disabilities to attend mainstream settings and specialized services simultaneously.

Policy Context & Recent Trends
Child Development Support Center (Jidō Hattatsu Shien Sentā) as of April 2024.

9

TRACK 1: Mainstream Early Childhood Settings (Inclusive Settings)

Children with disabilities can attend these settings with additional support as needed.

1 Hoikusho (Childcare/Nursery Centers)
For children 0-5 whose parents are working or otherwise unable to care for them at home.

2 Yōchien (Preschool/Kindergarten)
For children 0-5 whose parents are working or otherwise unable to care for them at home. Includes individualized educational support planning.

3 Nintei Kodomo-en (Certified Centers for Early Childhood Education and Care)
Combine functions of hoikusho and yōchien. Four subtypes:
- Integrated Center (Education + Care)
- Preschool-based (Preschool + Care)
- Childcare-based (Care + Education)
- Local Discretion Type (Locally defined hybrid)

The number of children with disabilities has roughly doubled over the past decade, reaching about 90,000 in 2024.

Children ages 0-5 attend together. Children ages 3-5 from all family types learn in the same classroom. Individualized education and care support plans are required for children with disabilities.

10

TRACK 2: Disability-Specific Outpatient Services (Specialized Support)
Implemented by municipalities under the Child Welfare Act.

4 Child Development Support Center (Jidō Hattatsu Shien Sentā)
Serves all types of disabilities (integrated well-type and medical-type centers as of April 2024).

5 Community-Based Child Development Support Programs (Jidō Hattatsu Shien Jigyō)
Smaller, community-based outpatient programs.

TRACK 3: Bridging and Itinerant Services
Bringing Expertise to Settings and Homes

6 Hoikusho-tō Hōmon Shien (Nursery Visitation Support)
Specialists visit childcare centers, preschools, and kindergartens to provide direct support to children and advice to staff. Usually about once or twice per month.

7 Kyotaku Hōmon-gata Jidō Hattatsu Shien (Home-Based Child Development Support)
For children with severe disabilities or other conditions that make outpatient visits difficult, support is provided at home. Support is provided safely at home.

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12



Photo taken at: Tonda certified Kodomo-en, Takatsuki City

13



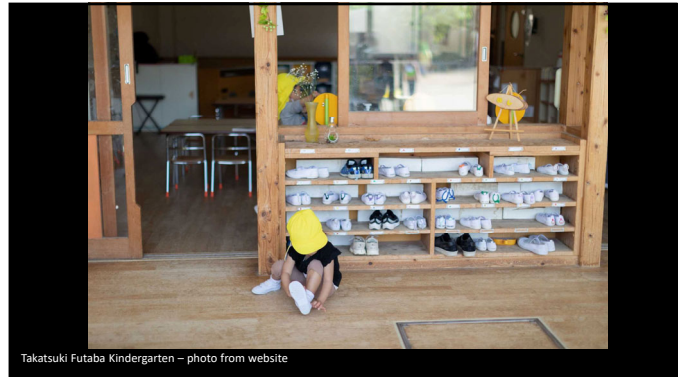
Miyamaki Nursery School

14



Photos taken at: Tonda certified Kodomo-en, Takatsuki City

15



Takatsuki Futaba Kindergarten – photo from website

16



Takatsuki Futaba Kindergarten

17



Miyamaki Nursery School

18

Child Autonomy and Child-Centered Approaches (E2)

- Hold high expectations of children, support peer engagement and independence, and include them in all physical activities, making modifications when needed.
- Offer children the option to complete preferred activities whenever possible. They integrate the child's special interests when doing an adult-directed activity.
- Expose children to new experiences, activities, and materials.

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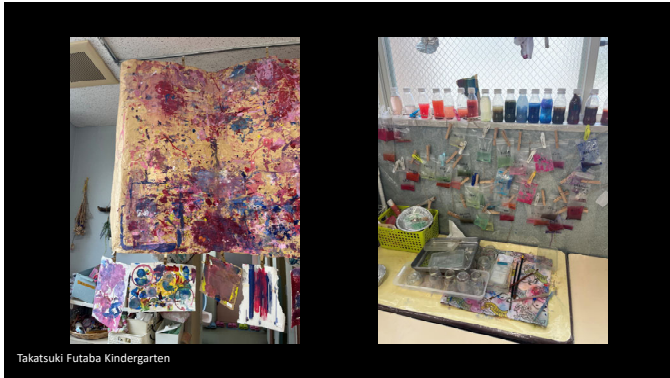
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23



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Takatsuki Futaba Kindergarten

25



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26



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27



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28



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29



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30

"Mimamoru" (Watching and Waiting) and Reflections on Inclusion in Japan

How is the *mimamoru* approach practiced in Japan?

- Is there a comparable approach practiced in the United States? Other countries?
- What are the considerations for implementing this approach in an inclusive setting? What are the necessary supports for children?



Miyamaki Nursery School

31

Visual Supports: Classroom Jobs



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32

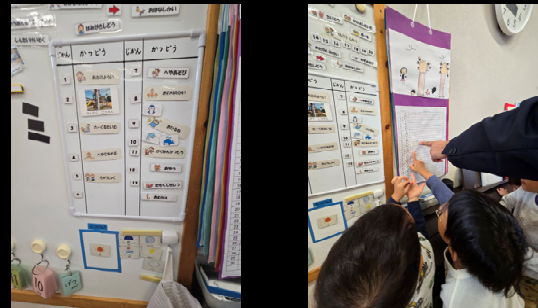
Visual Supports: Daily Schedule



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33

Visual Supports: Daily Schedule



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34

Visual Supports: Emotional Regulation



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35

Visual Supports: Emotional Regulation



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36



37



38



39



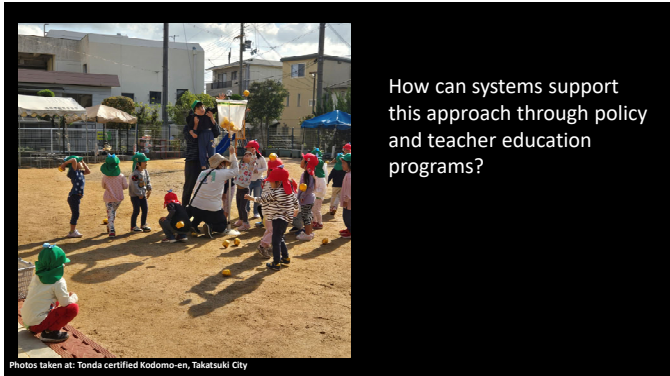
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41



42



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How can systems support this approach through policy and teacher education programs?

43



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"Anzen" (safety) vs. "Kiken Yochi" (predicting danger)

Active Risk as a tool for safety. Children are taught to identify and manage risk rather than avoid it entirely. Physical mastery builds cognitive persistence.

44



Takatsuki Futaba Kindergarten

"Children take on various challenges every day, and sometimes they get injured. There are dangers, both large and small, all around us, and it is impossible to eliminate them all. We believe that children cannot develop the ability to sense and understand dangers around them without experience."
--Futaba Center Director

45



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46



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47



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48



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49



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50

Autonomy, Inclusion, and the Power of Possibility
Intersection

Impact of play beyond autonomy
 In this study, the role of play in
 the lives of children with
 disabilities is explored. The study
 shows how play can be a powerful
 means of communication and
 social interaction for these children.
 The study also shows how play can
 be used to help children with
 disabilities learn about the world
 around them and to develop their
 own sense of autonomy and
 inclusion. The study concludes
 that play is a powerful means of
 communication and social
 interaction for children with
 disabilities, and that play can be
 used to help these children learn
 about the world around them and
 to develop their own sense of
 autonomy and inclusion.

Kozlowski, J. (2026). Autonomy, Inclusion, and the Power of Possibility. *Young Exceptional Children*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10962506261447490>

51



Photos taken at: Tonda certified Kodomo-en, Takatsuki City

52



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54

What are your thoughts about active risk?

- What observations do you have about the acceptance of risky play in your own cultural context?
- How can risky play opportunities impact children's first stories?
- How do our own life experiences with risk-taking influence our teaching practices?
- Do your own experiences with risk impact your current thinking about inclusion in early childhood? How so?



55

Resources

- Kozlowski, J. (2026). Autonomy, Inclusion, and the Power of Possibility. *Young Exceptional Children*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10962506261447490>
- April 2026 - Most interesting classroom may be outside - <https://everychildcanfly.substack.com/p/the-most-interesting-classroom-may>
- March 2026 - Beyond the Safety Net - <https://everychildcanfly.substack.com/p/beyond-the-safety-net>
- Feb 2026 - From Kyoto to Carolina - <https://everychildcanfly.substack.com/p/from-kyoto-to-carolina-japanese-approaches>
- Takatsuki Futaba Kindergarten: <https://www.takatsukifutaba.ed.jp/>
- Miyamaki Nursery School: <https://fadein.co.jp/en/works/miyamaki-nursery-school/>
- How Japanese Early Education Nurtures the Future of the World: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DmB2XJHVXE>
- What a Day in a Japanese Daycare is like: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylapUBDuC6E>

56



Thank You!
ありがとう

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www.everychildcanfly.com

57