



**The Japanese Practice of Mimamoru and Lessons on Inclusion**

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FPG Inclusion Institute

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**Richard M. Clifford Fund for International Collaboration on Early Learning Environments**

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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?

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**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.

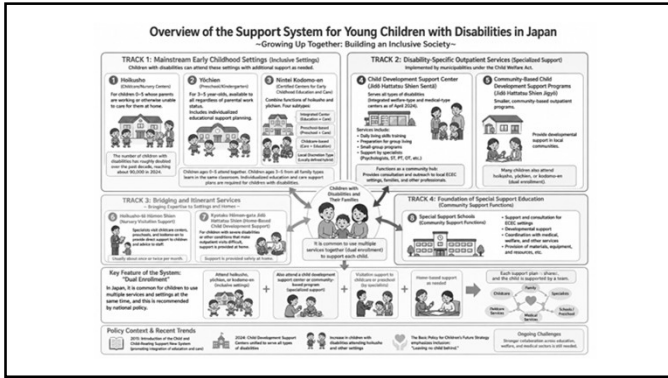
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"Kindergarten" *yochien* (幼稚園) – ages 3-5 and "Child Care/Nursery School" *hoikusho* (保育所) – 0-5

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

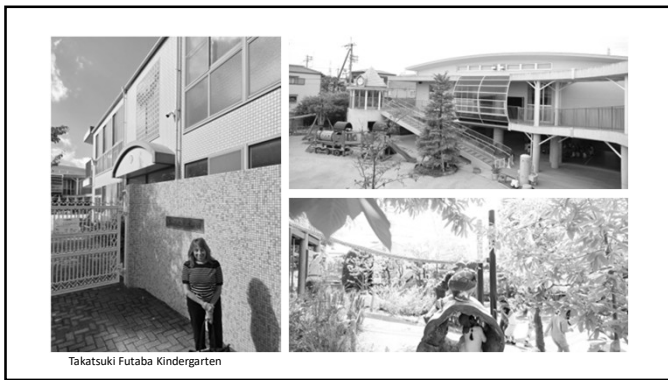
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# "Mimamoru" (Watching and Waiting) and Reflections on Inclusion in Japan

The *mimamoru* approach is a Japanese pedagogical strategy, translating to "watching over," where educators minimize immediate intervention in children's conflicts or activities to foster independence, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills.

Other observations:

- Fostering Self-help skills
- Child Autonomy – Child created learning materials
- Use of visual supports
- Peer supports



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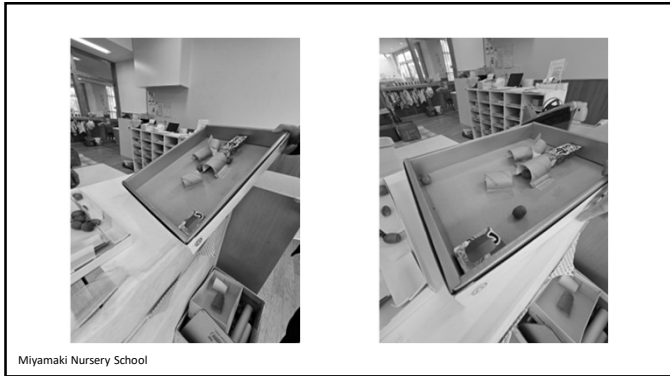
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Visual Supports: Classroom Jobs



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Visual Supports: Daily Schedule



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Visual Supports: Daily Schedule



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Visual Supports: Emotional Regulation



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Visual Supports: Emotional Regulation



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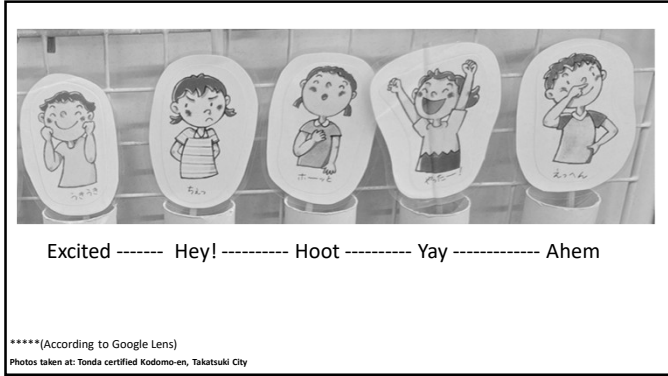
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Visual Supports: Emotional Regulation



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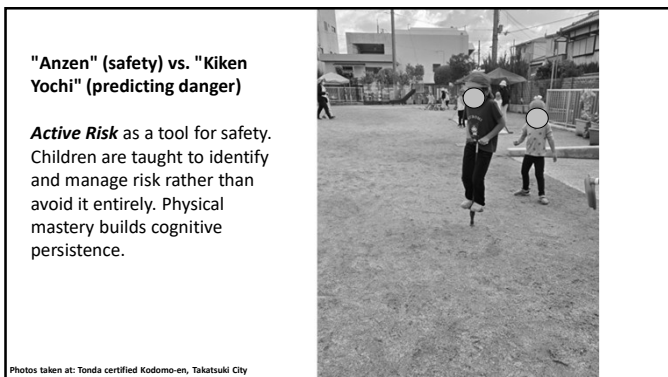


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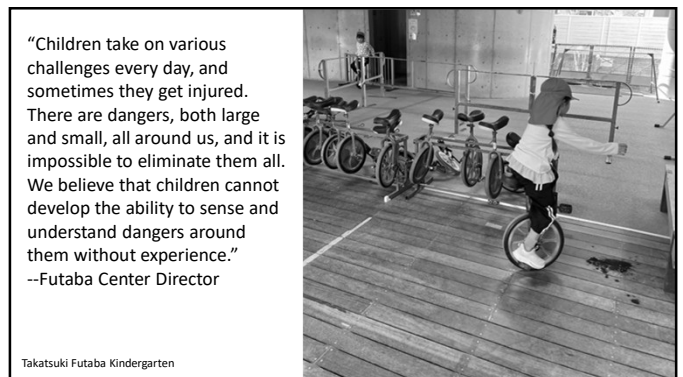


**"Anzen" (safety) vs. "Kiken Yochi" (predicting danger)**

**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.

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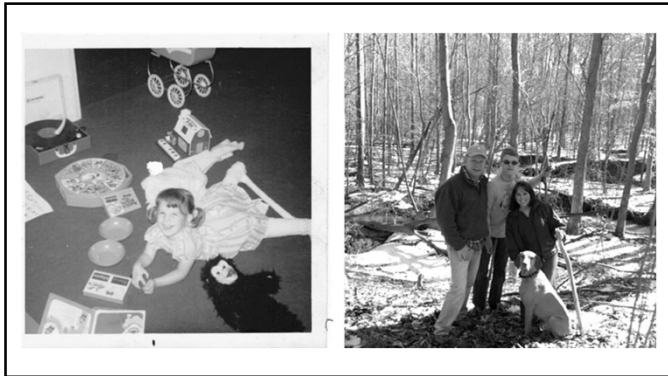
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"Children take on various challenges every day, and sometimes they get injured. There are dangers, both large and small, all around us, and it is impossible to eliminate them all. We believe that children cannot develop the ability to sense and understand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

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### Autonomy, Inclusion, and the Power of Possibility

## at the Intersection

I found it ironic to be asked to write about the intersection of autonomy, inclusion, and the power of possibility. This is not a simple task. It is a complex one. It is a task that requires a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist for people with disabilities. It is a task that requires a commitment to the idea that everyone has the right to live a life of dignity and autonomy.

At the intersection of these three concepts, we find a world of possibility. We find a world where people with disabilities are not just passive recipients of care, but active participants in their own lives. We find a world where people with disabilities are not just seen as a burden, but as a source of strength and inspiration.

It is a world where the power of possibility is not just a dream, but a reality. It is a world where the power of possibility is the power of hope, the power of love, and the power of a better future for all.

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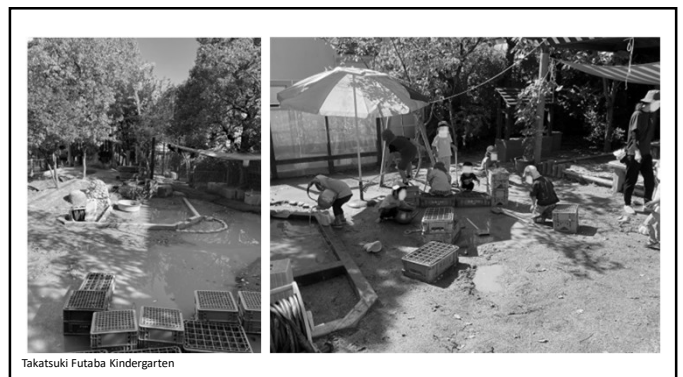
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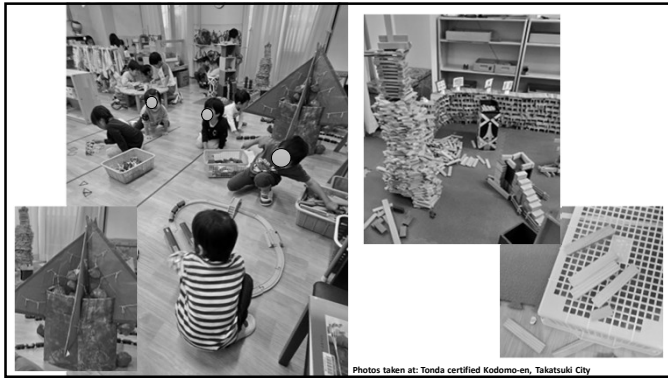
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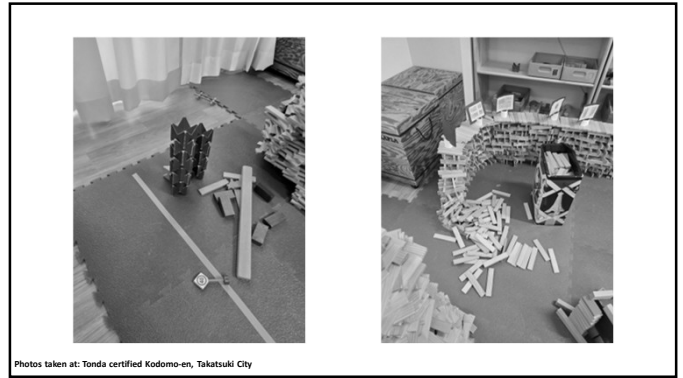


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What are your thoughts about active risk?

- Take a moment to reflect on your own and then share with a partner.
- 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?

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### 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=yIapUBDuC6E>

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### Contact information

Every Child Can Fly - Jani Kozlowski Inclusion Updates

Name \*  
Short answer text

Email \*  
Short answer text

**Let's Stay In Touch!**

Share your contact info with me:  
<https://forms.gle/yssz8RSPyWGp5BUp6>

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Thank You!  
ありがとう



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Nature and Environmental Learning:  
Unstructured, natural environments with water, dirt, and animals to encourage sensory exploration and imaginative, self-directed play.



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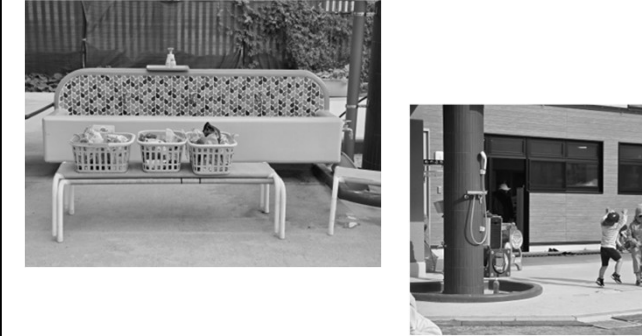
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*Shokuiku* (食育) education system that combines nutrition science with cultural appreciation, transforming school meals into "living textbooks". Mandated by the 2005 Basic Act on Shokuiku, it teaches children about sustainable eating, local agriculture, and gratitude for food sources to foster lifelong healthy habits



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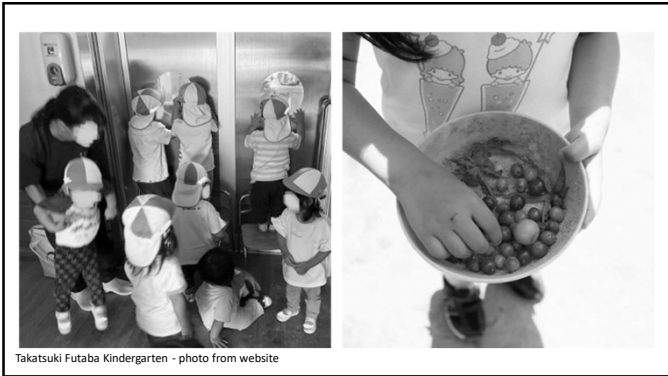
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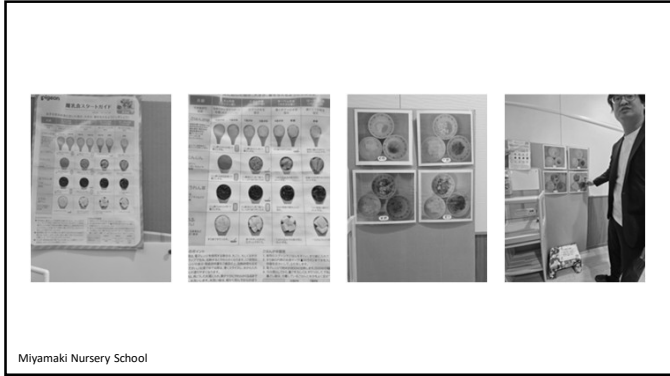
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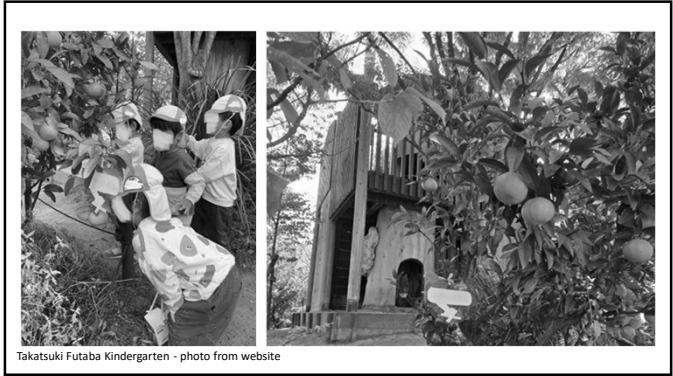


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