

Inclusion Ready News

Term 4 2023



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From the Manager, KU Sector Capacity Building Program

It is hard to believe we have made it to term 4! 2023 has been another big year of some ongoing challenges with educator shortages for community preschools. We are inspired every day by the work that you do in community preschools to provide high quality inclusive education to children of all abilities across NSW. I hope that your team have an opportunity at this stage of the year to celebrate the positive inclusion outcomes of your work. We look forward to continuing to work with you to enhance inclusive practices in 2024.

In this edition we share the news that our team recently received an award! We also reflect on the wide range of ways that inclusive practices are being enhanced by preschools through the Preschool Profile and Action Plan process. The feature article for this issue is: 'Embracing neurodiversity - supporting every child's right to belong'. We hope the content of this piece may promote consideration of a fresh perspective on the way we see and support children with diverse abilities. Disability and Inclusion Program Funding application dates are provided in this newsletter for this last quarter of 2023. You can also find out about our Term 4 Professional Learning offerings and some inclusion-related grants that are currently open. Feedback from our successful Inclusion Café events is also provided in this edition. Enjoy reading!



Emma Pierce
Manager, NSW Preschool Inclusion, Sector Capacity Building Program,
KU Children's Services

KU Awards announced for 2023

We are so proud to have been nominated for an award in the 2023 KU 'Making the KU Difference Awards'. The KU Sector Capacity Building Program team won the KU 'Making the KU Difference by Representing KU Award', in recognition of the inclusion support provided to 376 community preschools in 8 regions of NSW.



Outcomes of the reflective Preschool Profile and Action Plan process

In term 3, we enjoyed the reflective conversations we had with preschool teams. We are excited to work with you to achieve the outcomes identified and implement actions to further improve inclusive practice. It has been uplifting to see the wide range of innovative improvements preschools are continuously identifying to offer the accessible, engaging programs for all children.

Here are just a few inspiring areas that preschools are planning to work with their KU Preschool Inclusion Consultant on over the next 12 months:

- ▶ Collaboratively reviewing and developing inclusion-related policies
- ▶ Building team understanding of family-centred practice
- ▶ Delivering customised inclusion-related professional development for preschool teams
- ▶ Researching, sourcing and curating information in relation to specific inclusive practice needs

Disability and Inclusion Program funding

Notification of outcome and payment dates

Final adjustments* - December 2023

*Only certain types of variations (increase in hours, decrease in hours, extended absence, child has left) and applications for children enrolled after the Quarter 4 application cut-off date (13 October) will be considered for payment. For further information please see the Disability & Inclusion Program funding guidelines.

2024 Disability and Inclusion Program guidelines have just been released

There are a number of key changes to the guidelines. The Department of Education are running a free webinar about the changes to the 2024 Disability and Inclusion program funding guidelines on Monday 6 November, 2:30-3:15pm. You can register at: <https://events.humanitix.com/2024-disability-and-inclusion-program-guidelines-explained>.

We are also able to provide more specific information about the DIP funding guidelines to all preschools.

The 2024 High Learning Support Needs and Inclusive Environments (previously known as Minor Capital Works) funding guidelines can be found at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/disability-and-inclusion-program>

Contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant if you need support with completing these funding applications.

Inclusion-related grants

We Join Community Grant – Variety

- ▶ For services to purchase equipment that promotes access and inclusivity in the community for children.
- ▶ These grants do not cover capital works but could cover inclusive play equipment, adaptive toys and other great supplies and resources.
- ▶ Amount: Up to \$10,000.
- ▶ Applications are open year round.

<https://www.variety.org.au/nsw/we-join-community-grant>

Community Building Partnership 2023 Grant Round – NSW Department of Communities and Justice

- ▶ Infrastructure investment aimed to deliver positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes, while also promoting community participation, inclusion and cohesion.
- ▶ Maximum of \$300,000 is allocated to each NSW state electorate. Projects must be completed by 31 August 2025.
- ▶ Amount: \$5,000 to \$150,000.
- ▶ Currently open for applications and closes Friday 27 October 2023.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/community-building-partnership-2023-round>

Free NSW Department of Education library for educators

The Jill Sherlock Memorial Learning Assistance Library is located at Oatlands Public School in Sydney and is associated with NSW Centre for Effective Reading, and is aimed mostly at school aged resources, but there are some useful teaching resources that could enhance inclusive practices in our preschools.

For more information about the library, go to:

- ▶ <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/the-jill-sherlock-memorial-assistance-library/about-us>
- ▶ <https://sherlock.library.det.nsw.edu.au/1/home/news>

The physical library can be visited during school terms. Borrowing is open only in school terms online and is free of charge.

Term 4 Professional Learning

You will find all our upcoming webinars and workshops listed under ‘Upcoming Events’ at:

<https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/professional-learning/events>

Upcoming webinar:

- ▶ **Every Child’s Right to Inclusion; Understanding our Obligations Under the Disability Discrimination Act**

Presented by Rhonda Livingstone, ACECQA – Wednesday 8 November 4:30pm-5:30pm

A range of face-to-face workshops and inclusion networking sessions are also being planned in various locations based on regional priorities. Please keep an eye on your email for registration details.

All our Sector Capacity Building Program events are funded by the NSW Department of Education as part of the Disability and Inclusion Program, making them free to all community preschool educators.

Conference Watch

- ▶ **Reimagine Australia National Conference** (formerly known as Early Childhood Intervention Australia)
20-22 November 2023, Brisbane
<https://reimagine2023.world>
- ▶ **OMEP Asia Pacific Conference**
Looking Back, Moving Forward: Progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific Region – Strand 1 Providing accessible, equitable, and inclusive quality early education for all young children
6-8 December 2023, Macquarie University, Sydney
<https://event.mq.edu.au/omep2023>
- ▶ **CCSA Rural and Remote Forum**
Future Thinking, Sky's the Limit
13-15 March 2024, Hunter Valley
<https://ccsa.org.au/rff>

Free inclusion mentoring support available to all preschool educators

Our team of experienced early childhood, inclusive and special education teachers provide consultancy support to educators in community-based preschools. As the program name suggests, our aim is to build educators' capacity to include children with disability and additional needs on the same basis as their peers. Coaching and mentoring is available to educators of all levels of experience.

Mentoring and coaching at your preschool may involve:

- ▶ Spending time on the floor together with educators
- ▶ Modelling the use of particular strategies
- ▶ Providing supportive feedback
- ▶ Providing tailored information to educators around areas of identified priority

If you would like to talk about a mentoring and coaching visit, please contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant.



Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion

Supporting inclusive toilet learning



Case study

During orientation, a family mentions that their child is not yet toilet trained, but they are planning to work on this over the summer and hope that they will be using the toilet by the time preschool starts. The parent mentions that they have noticed that their child has been later to develop in some areas. When the first day of preschool arrives, the parents very apologetically let you know that they have been unsuccessful and that their child is wearing pull ups.

It is likely that you have come across some similar stories at your preschool. Inclusive preschools reflect on current practice, and recognise that toileting is a skill that requires a flexible approach. Children learn to use the toilet at different rates and as educators we need to meet each child at their current stage to support their learning and development.

Historically, some preschools may have had policies requiring children to be toilet-trained before starting preschool. This may have related to physical limitations of the preschool bathroom, or previously accepted beliefs and practices. Under our ethical obligations, and with our current understanding of child development, we now need to find ways to meet every child's needs.

Some possible reasons a child may not be using the toilet:

- ▶ There may be a medical reason for toilet learning not occurring before preschool age.
- ▶ The child may not be sensing the feeling of needing to pass urine or faeces as a result of sensory processing issues.
- ▶ The impact of stress and anxiety on toilet training can be significant. Changes such as moving house or parental relationship breakdowns can also impact on toileting skills.
- ▶ External pressures may have negatively impacted on a child's associations with using the toilet.
- ▶ Individual differences in bladder or bowel activity levels exist for children.
- ▶ Not generalising use of the toilet from home to preschool can also be a challenge.

Reflective questions

- ▶ How inclusive are your preschool's policies in relation to toileting and nappy changing?
- ▶ Have you had children start at your preschool who are not yet consistently using the toilet?

- ▶ Even with physical environment limitations, what could we do to support the child in their toilet learning process?
- ▶ How are we promoting the rights of individual children to dignity and respect for differences?
- ▶ How can we adapt our environment to meet the nappy changing or toileting needs of every child at their current stage? E.g., could we apply for funding to purchase changing facilities?
- ▶ How do we collaborate with families, so they feel confident to openly share information about their child and support them with this process?

One preschool's inclusive improvements

The team at Concord West Rhodes Preschool applied for Minor Capital Works funding (from 2024 known as Inclusive Environments funding) for a hydraulic nappy change table in 2023 due to increasing numbers of children enrolling who were still toilet learning.

The preschool's Director Marnie Omeragic explains, *"We applied for the nappy change table due to lack of change facilities at the centre. The preschool is community based, operating in a council building purpose built in 1976. It had no nappy change facilities as traditionally children needed to be toilet trained before attending a preschool program. Times have changed thankfully, as our understanding of inclusion has developed and awareness of developmental variances and stressors that impact development has increased. We now have a very effective nappy change system ready for all children who attend in future years. Not being toilet trained is no longer a barrier for attendance and inclusion for anyone."*

If your preschool would benefit from some visual supports for toileting, ask your Preschool Inclusion Consultant for help.

Applying for Inclusive Environments funding for hydraulic change tables

- ▶ You can now apply for Inclusive Environments funding based on a child or children's need for constant and ongoing support with or without a HLSN needs application.
- ▶ Please note for 2024 a new Inclusion Readiness fund for preschools who have not previously received HLSN or MCW funding is being trialled, where up to \$5,000 ex GST for equipment or modifications can be applied for.
- ▶ When applying for a hydraulic change table through Inclusive Environments funding stream, a quote needs to be included.
- ▶ N.B. Hydraulic change tables do not require a specific letter of support from a specialist.
- ▶ For further information, you can seek support from your Preschool Inclusion Consultant.

Resources

- ▶ <https://www.continence.org.au/news/toilet-training-resources>
- ▶ <https://www.continence.org.au/news/toilet-training-children-special-needs>
- ▶ <https://allplaylearn.org.au/early/educator/daily-strategies>
- ▶ <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/health-wellbeing/toileting-hygiene/toilet-training-autism>
- ▶ <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/search?s=toileting>

If you have an inspiring story about the 'Road to Inclusion' that your preschool is on, we would love to hear from you! Please chat to your Preschool Inclusion Consultant about any ideas.

Embracing neurodiversity – supporting every child’s right to belong



What is neurodiversity?

“Neurodiversity” was a term first coined by Australian sociologist Judy Singer in the 1990s. Singer, who is autistic, rejected the idea that people with autism were disabled and instead argued that their brain simply worked differently. This thinking is reinforced in the EYLF V 2.0 definition of neurodiversity as; “The diversity of human minds. It describes the range of differences in individual brain functioning and behaviour, regarded as part of the variance in human populations.” (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE] (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0*).

Broadly speaking, neurodiversity means different brains work in different ways. It is also an umbrella term used to refer to people who have autism, ADHD, OCD, giftedness, Tourette’s Syndrome and dyslexia as well as many other conditions. Neurodiversity is seen as a difference, not a deficit.

Dr. Melanie Heyworth, co-founder of Reframing Autism, explains that “neurodiversity humanises us, because it allows us just to ‘be’ part of that rich tapestry of humanity. Without judgement.”

Our team has facilitated a number of very well attended neurodiversity workshops for educators in the Murrumbidgee, Northern Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains regions over recent months. If this topic is an area you would like to explore further, please let us know.

Executive functioning

Neurodiversity can affect a person’s executive functioning skills, such as working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control. As educators, it is important for us to recognise that neurodivergent children we work with will generally find it more challenging to stay on task, plan ahead and regulate emotions than their typically developing peers. Many neurodivergent children don’t have the usual internal management system for executive functioning – so they need to “manually control” what neurotypical children perform on “autopilot”. This can be hard work!

Language matters!

Language shapes the way we view the world. Children develop their sense of self by processing what others tell them about who they are in the world (Mitchel, 2014). The language we use reflects our beliefs, values, and ideas and as our ideas and beliefs change over time, it is important to engage in ongoing discussion and reflection.

Modelling inclusive language in the important early years holds power for the children we work with and influences how our educator colleagues, children and families use language. Language can be powerful. The more we use deficit-based language, the more this can reinforce stereotypes and ‘othering’ of people who have disabilities.

If in doubt about what language and terminology to use, reflect with your team, and ask the child and/or their family what language they would like you to use. While there are some more commonly accepted terms, everyone will have their own preferences.

Practical ways to support inclusion and embrace neurodiversity

- ▶ Ensuring a child feels secure.
- ▶ Learn about the interests, strengths and challenges of the individual.
- ▶ Provide movement breaks for children who need these.
- ▶ Use a combination of auditory and visual cues to communicate.
- ▶ Break tasks down into easier-to-process chunks.
- ▶ Consider the impacts of sensory input e.g., lights, noise, smells.
- ▶ Provide predictable learning environments.
- ▶ Support transitions e.g., use transitional objects, ‘first and then’ charts etc.
- ▶ Use multiple ways to deliver and capture learning e.g., Universal Design for Learning.
- ▶ Allow children to communicate using their preferred method (spoken, signed, other forms of Augmentative and Alternative Communication).
- ▶ Avoid goals that aim to eliminate or reduce autistic traits e.g., allow self-stimulating where this is calming for the child.
- ▶ Incorporate the child’s perspective and goals as much as possible.

Questions to support critical reflection

- ▶ As a team, discuss and document the language you wish to use in your program in relation to neurodiversity? How can you implement changes moving forward?
- ▶ How would you challenge your colleagues when they use language that makes you feel uncomfortable?
- ▶ Reflect on a time that you felt you did not “belong”. Unpack this from the perspective of a child.
- ▶ What changes can we make to our learning environments to support all children’s needs?
- ▶ What understandings do we have about children’s behaviour as a tool of communication and connection? What changes can we make in our practice to support children?
- ▶ How do we identify and address barriers to participation and promote inclusion and belonging for neurodivergent children?
- ▶ How do we support all children to be their authentic selves?



Inclusion Café events

Recently, educators across Northern Sydney and the Blue Mountains met for a series of 'Inclusion Café' events. The focus of these informal events was to share inclusion resources, books, visual supports, challenges and positive stories from their preschools.

The Inclusion Café events provided an opportunity to network with colleagues and participants reported feeling connected to others. One participant commented, "we loved the opportunity to meet up with you and all the other fabulous educators. There's something very powerful about connecting with others who have similar desires to support children."

We hope to keep the conversations going and continue to grow and learn together over the coming year. Keep an eye out for other similar informal inclusion networking events.

Free resource to support educators to prepare and respond to Big Situations

With the distressing global events occurring around the world, educators may be finding it important to access information to help their teams to prepare and respond to events to support children and families in their community.

This free resource developed by the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency provides sample case stories to reflect on and links to relevant sources of support. Topics covered include: loss and grief, natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics, critical incidents, and family violence.

You can access this free resource at: <https://inclusionagency NSWACT.org.au/about/big-situations>.

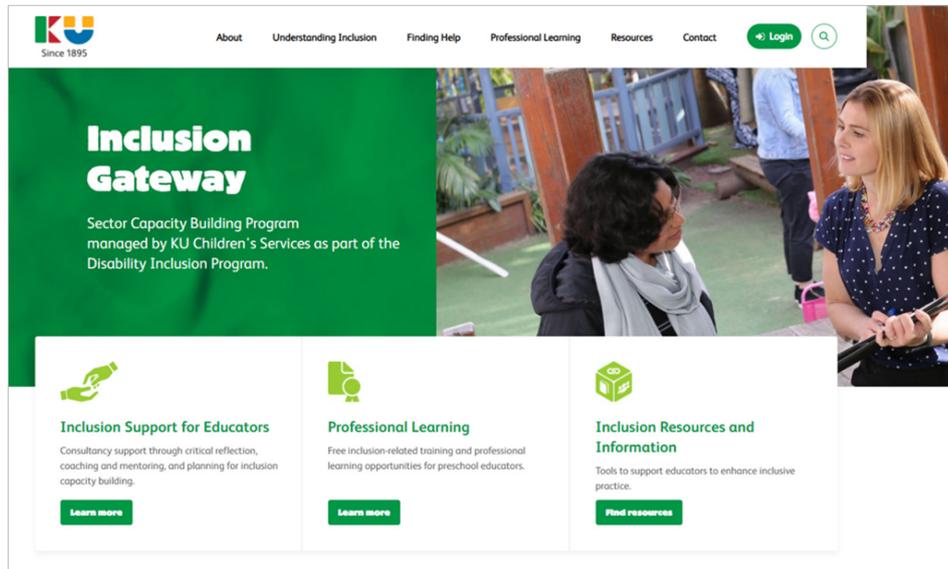
Please let us know of any specific support you may be needing.

The Sector Capacity Building Program is funded by the NSW Government Department of Education as part of the Disability and Inclusion Program.

On the next page:
KU Inclusion Gateway
website login details
and printable poster for
your staff room



KU Inclusion Gateway Website



www.kudisabilityinclusion.com.au

To access the KU Inclusion Gateway website, use the following login and password:

Username: CommunityPreschool

Password: CommunityPreschool

Information for educators about the KU Sector Capacity Building Program

The Sector Capacity Building Program Preschool Inclusion Consultants are funded by the NSW Department of Education to:

- ▶ Increase educators' capacity to include children with disability and additional needs on the same basis as their peers.
- ▶ Increase educators' capacity to provide specialised transition to school support for children with disabilities and additional needs.
- ▶ Enable equitable education outcomes for children with disability and additional needs consistent with the five outcome areas of the Early Years Learning Framework (Identity, Connectedness, Wellbeing, Confident and Involved Learners, Communication).
- ▶ Support educators to understand the external support options for children with disability and additional needs, and how these supports can be used to complement the preschool program.

Your preschool is entitled to 8 hours of support each term from the Sector Capacity Building Program.

Contact your consultant directly or go to <https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/contact>