

Inclusion Ready News

Term 1 2023



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From the Manager, KU Sector Capacity Building Program

We hope that term 1 is going well for you.

In this issue of Inclusion Ready News, we share information pertinent to inclusion at the start of a new year. As new children and families commence with your service there are new relationships to build and there may be developmental concerns that arise for some children. We aim to provide information that supports you at this time of the preschool year in our first newsletter of 2023.

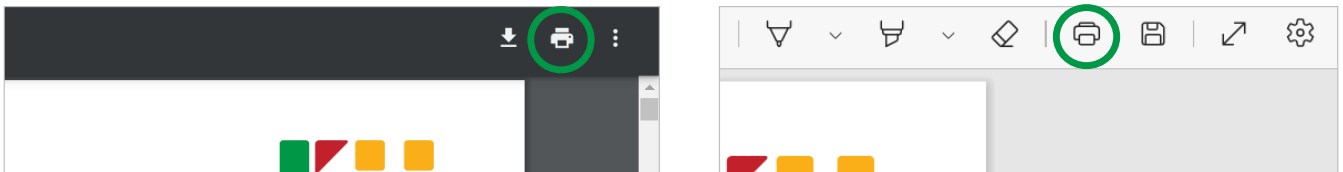
We have shared short articles about reflecting on the preschool's physical environments, inclusion-readiness, and building relationships with families. A regular feature in our newsletter from now on will be *Moving Beyond Quality on the Road to Inclusion*. On this occasion, we hear from educators about their perspectives on what makes the most difference to inclusion. We have also included Disability and Inclusion Program funding information and much, much more!

With our greatly expanded professional development offerings over much of NSW, we will not be listing every event in the newsletter. Each preschool will continue to be emailed about events in your region as they are confirmed.

We encourage you to share this newsletter with all members of your team.

How to print and share this newsletter with your whole team

If you have opened the newsletter in your **web browser** (such as Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge), click on the **print icon** in the toolbar at the top of the page. See below for examples.



If you have opened the newsletter in a **PDF reader program** such as Adobe Reader, go to the top navigation menu, click **File** then **Print**.

A Print dialogue box should then appear, where you can choose your print settings. Once you've selected all your settings, click **Print**.



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

Information for educators about the KU 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 per term from the Sector Capacity Building Program.

Here are some of the ways we can help:

- ▶ Talking over the phone or online to discuss inclusion priorities at your preschool.
- ▶ Providing free inclusion consultancy visits to your preschool.
- ▶ Provide free professional development and networking sessions both face to face and online.
- ▶ Coaching and mentoring educators and supporting them to reflect on inclusive practice.
- ▶ Supporting a team approach to guiding children's behaviour.
- ▶ Supporting you to collaborate with visiting professionals, e.g., therapists.
- ▶ Linking you with support such as applying for Disability Inclusion Program funding for children with high learning support needs.
- ▶ Providing current information about where to refer families for further support.
- ▶ Researching information and relevant resources to support your inclusive practice.

Please note that travel time also makes up part of the time allocated to your preschool.

Providing feedback about the KU Sector Capacity Building Program

We are currently preparing a short survey to seek your feedback on your experience of the Sector Capacity Building Program.

You are also always welcome to contact Emma Pierce (Manager, Sector Capacity Building Program) with any suggestions and comments by calling [0413 406 285](tel:0413406285) or emailing emma.pierce@ku.com.au.

Disability and Inclusion Program Funding application dates

Below are details of the 2023 cut off dates for High Learning Support Needs (HLSN) and Minor Capital Works (MCW) funding applications. Contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant if you need support with completing these funding applications.

2023 cut-off dates for HLSN & MCW funding applications	Notification of outcome and payment dates
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 2 December 2022	Quarter 1 - February 2023 (Funding is for January to March)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 10 March 2023	Quarter 2 - April 2023 (Funding is for April to June)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 26 May 2023	Quarter 3 - July 2023 (Funding is for July to September)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 18 August 2023	Quarter 4 - October 2023 (Funding is for October to December)
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 13 October 2023	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 will be considered for payment.

For further information please see the Disability & Inclusion Program Funding Guidelines at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/disability-and-inclusion-program/2023-high-learning-support-needs-funding-guidelines#5.5>



Term 1 professional learning

KU Sector Capacity Building Program (SCB) webinars and workshops

For our full range of workshops and webinars, please keep an eye your email inbox for information about our professional learning events.

You will also find all our upcoming webinars and workshops listed under 'Upcoming Events' at <https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/professional-learning/events>

Some topics this term include:

- ▶ Planning for inclusion in 2023
- ▶ Anxiety and the BRAVE Program from the University of Queensland
- ▶ Supporting bilingual children and identifying concerns
- ▶ The NDIS Early Childhood Approach and using the Working Together Agreement to support collaboration. Co-delivered by NDIS Partners in the community and the KU SCB team

Conference Watch

- ▶ **Two Weeks of Connection & Professional Learning on the Pyramid Model**
– Prof Mary Louise Hemmeter
20-31 March 2023, Melbourne
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/two-weeks-of-connection-and-professional-learning-on-the-pyramid-model-tickets-480804327687>
- ▶ **Early Childhood Australia Conference**
4-7 October 2023, Adelaide
<https://www.econference.com.au>
- ▶ **Reimagine Australia National Conference** (formerly known as Early Childhood Intervention Australia)
20-22 November 2023, Brisbane
<https://reimagine2023.world>

Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion

Educator reflections on what supported change and development in their inclusive practice at their preschools.

Information shared in this article comes from interviews we conducted with a number of high capacity preschools where they had engaged in a process of critical reflection and made significant changes in relation to inclusive practices.

The preschools interviewed have been supported by the KU Sector Capacity Building Program since 2019. These responses were shared as part of a presentation entitled *Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion for all* at the Early Childhood Australia 2022 National Conference.

The SCB team analysed the interview responses and noted that six main themes and factors influencing change were evident. Below are the identified themes and some examples of the insightful responses that educators provided.

- ▶ **Critical reflection** – Being prepared to question existing practices even if they appear to be working. Questioning educator attitudes and views about inclusion.
“It’s a journey and we’re doing things slowly to support educators’ professional identity.” – Rhonda, Lapstone Preschool
- ▶ **Inclusion readiness** – Being proactive rather than reactive. Embedding inclusive practice.
“We like to get our children involved also in helping each other and respecting that differences are just as important as the things that make us the same.” – Sherelle, Integricare Brighton Le Sands Preschool
- ▶ **Strong leadership** – Being a ‘critical friend’, having high expectations and ‘moving the bar forward’ when required.
“You have to create a safe space where people can express their fears and concerns.” – Helen, Drummoyne Preschool
- ▶ **Collaboration** – Having a shared vision for inclusion with all stakeholders.
“Understand the child as part of the bigger picture, the child as part of us, part of the family, part of community.” – Helen, Drummoyne Preschool
- ▶ **Whole team approach** – When educator capacity around inclusion is built, all team members feel confident to work with all children.
“Inclusion isn’t one person...it absolutely holds power with the amount of people that share that vision of inclusion.” – Liz, Warilla Baptist Preschool
- ▶ **Professional support** – Tailored support and access to inclusion-specific training and resources.
“Actually looking for the resources and the mentoring that each educator needs to come in on that journey.” – Rhonda, Lapstone Preschool

“Inclusion is not an end point, it is a process, a philosophy, and an ever-evolving set of practices” – Dr Kathy Cologon, 2021

We asked: **Do you think you’ll ever have a day where you could sit back and say, “hey, we’ve done it, we’ve made it, we’re inclusive, now let’s think about something else?”**

- ▶ *“No way, no. I will always be having to reflect on what we’re doing well and...what we can do better and what we can learn...it’s a continual reflection.”* – Sherelle, Integricare Brighton Le Sands Preschool

FEATURE ARTICLE

Partnerships and collaboration with families



As we begin 2023 after a few years of disruption to our usual programs and orientation processes, it is important we bring our attention back to integral aspects of our quality practices that may have been impacted by 'COVID-life'. Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) 'Building partnerships with families' outlines how crucial strong partnerships and collaboration with families are. "Research shows children are much more likely to reach their full potential in life when their family and education and care service work together" (ACECQA).

Relationships are the cornerstones of our work and are based on mutual trust, respect and honesty. Our roles, as early childhood professionals are multi-faceted. As we build partnerships with families, we are required to balance the elements of Quality Area 6, such as supporting the involvement of families, respecting parent's viewpoints, ensuring children's inclusion and participation, all while advocating for children in our care. Together, we have an incredible capacity to influence learning outcomes for children, through our shared goals.

Supporting families of children with developmental differences/disabilities is an ongoing journey and this partnership involves continuing conversations with families, both informal and formal. At times some conversations can be challenging. It is important as educators that we build a partnership based on trust and respect.

As we reflect on building partnerships with families, some questions to consider might include:

- ▶ How do we create warm and welcoming spaces reflecting our community?
- ▶ How can we help all families develop a sense of belonging?
- ▶ What does "being responsive" to families look like in our preschool? Are there some boundaries we need to consider?
- ▶ How can we find time/opportunities to build trusting relationships?
- ▶ In what ways do we show that we are responsive to each family's situation?
- ▶ How do we ensure we maintain professionalism and confidentiality?
- ▶ What are the ways in which our families would like us to communicate with them?
- ▶ What are the expectations of each family? How can we find out what they are?
- ▶ How do we support and reassure families who may be anxious about their child separating from them at preschool?
- ▶ How do we promote a common understanding of inclusion?
- ▶ How do we promote the benefits and value of inclusion for all children and families?

There are a range of resources available on the KU Inclusion Gateway to support educators to raise concerns with families. Your Preschool Inclusion Consultant is also available for further assistance.

"Partnerships are based on the foundations of respecting each other's perspectives, expectations and values, and building on the strength of each other's knowledge and skills." – EYLF, Australian Dept of Education, V2.0, 2022, p.14

Creating inclusive learning environments



As the year begins, and we set and re-set our learning environments, it's a great time to look at our spaces through an inclusion lens. "In the approved learning frameworks, the concept of belonging is linked to a strong sense of identity. Physical environments play a major role in contributing to both identity and belonging." (ACECQA - Quality Area 3: The environment as the 'third teacher', Information Sheet, 2018).

When we reflect on our learning spaces, we can be guided by two of the key questions posed in the EYLF. Who is advantaged? Who is disadvantaged? To ensure these spaces for play are inclusive for all children to participate in, it is important that they are not only accessible for all children physically, but also that children feel a sense of belonging in that particular space within the environment.

We can start by looking at each learning space and making sure the way we set up each area is:

- ▶ **Intentional** – What do we want the children to experience/learn here? Do we provide what they need?
- ▶ **Individualised** – Think about the needs of individuals and the group. Is information presented in different ways so all children can access it?
- ▶ **Inclusive** – In this space are there many ways of learning and many ways of succeeding? Is there clear physical access? Are there visual prompts? Are the children themselves reflected in this space?

In late 2022, the KU SCB team ran a workshop across many of our regions, *Understanding children's sensory needs – creating calming spaces*. We discussed how setting up a calming space can help children to self-regulate (or co-regulate if this is their stage of emotional development), learn strategies for maintaining an optimal arousal level and create a feeling of security and comfort.

Children engage with these spaces most effectively when they have shared opportunities to plan, set up and modify the space. Seeking input from the children and determining an agreement for how the space is to be used with them will lead to a highly functional space in your preschool. The introduction of a calming space not only helps meet children's social and emotional needs, but it can also play a role in decreasing challenging behaviours at preschool.

“Planning our calming space became a group project. Together we created a wonderful space where the children had a strong sense of ownership, connection and wellbeing” – Preschool Educator

At the beginning of the year, children may need a range of supports to understand what the expectations of the program are and when you are settling many children, this can sometimes feel like an overwhelming task.

Visual supports can be particularly useful for supporting all children’s understanding of life at preschool. Visual schedules, visual cue cards and visual play scaffolds are tools that not only support communication, they allow children time to process verbal messages, prepare for transitions, build independence and reduce anxiety associated with separation and new situations.



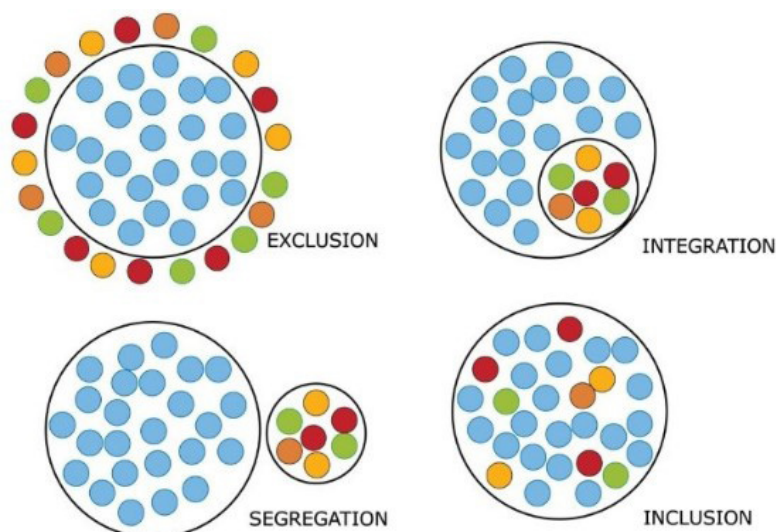
It is worth noting, that a feature of high-quality learning environments is the responsiveness and engagement of the educators working in that space. Someone to guide, support and scaffold children’s learning and promote inclusion is integral.

If you would like to explore some of these ideas further, your Preschool Inclusion Consultant is available to support your team to:

- ▶ Critically reflect on inclusion across your environment
- ▶ Plan to develop calming spaces
- ▶ Provide tailored visual supports and support your team to embed them across your program.

Please call your Preschool Inclusion Consultant to arrange a visit!

Let's take a moment to reflect on...What is true inclusion?



Adapted with permission from ABT Associates and Instituto Alana, 2016. A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education.

When unpacking the concept of inclusion at your preschool, these questions might guide your discussions:

- ▶ What are my beliefs about inclusion?
- ▶ How can we respectfully challenge ourselves and others around our values and beliefs about inclusion?
- ▶ How do we know if our practices are inclusive of every child?
- ▶ How do we learn about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests?
- ▶ How do we make decisions about children's daily experiences and routines, and who is involved in making these decisions?
- ▶ How do we support every child's participation in the program?

What's new on the Inclusion Gateway

There are some new resources on the KU SCB Inclusion Gateway this quarter. You are now able to access:

- ▶ Cultural Understandings of Disability Webinar presented by Sabira Sukurma
- ▶ Supporting a Positive Transition to Preschool – for Educators – Tip Sheet
- ▶ Supporting a Positive Transition to Preschool – for Families – Tip Sheet

For information about how to login to the Inclusion Gateway, please see the flyer/poster attached and print for your staff room. Please let us know of any specific support you may be need.



Supporting a Positive Transition to Preschool - For Educators

A tip sheet for educators about how they can support children to have a smooth start to their time at Preschool.

Transitions



Supporting a Positive Transition to Preschool - For Families

A tip sheet for families about how they can support their child to have a smooth start to their time at Preschool.

Transitions Families



Cultural Understandings of Disability Webinar

Learn how to work with families from diverse backgrounds, as they navigate disability and developmental difference.

Families Cultural Diversity

Introducing our new KU SCB Preschool Inclusion Consultant



Katie Wright

Northern Sydney and Western Sydney regions

Email: katie.wright@ku.com.au Phone: 0481 125 278

Katie holds a Masters in Early Childhood Education and a Masters in Research (Inclusive Early Childhood Education). She has worked as a Director and Educator in preschools and long day care settings, and has lectured at Macquarie University, Sydney University and TAFE, specialising in inclusive early childhood education and ethics/social justice.

Over the last five years, Katie has also worked on several education-based research projects. She is passionate about celebrating human diversity and supporting all children's full participation, as valued, uniquely capable, and contributing individuals.

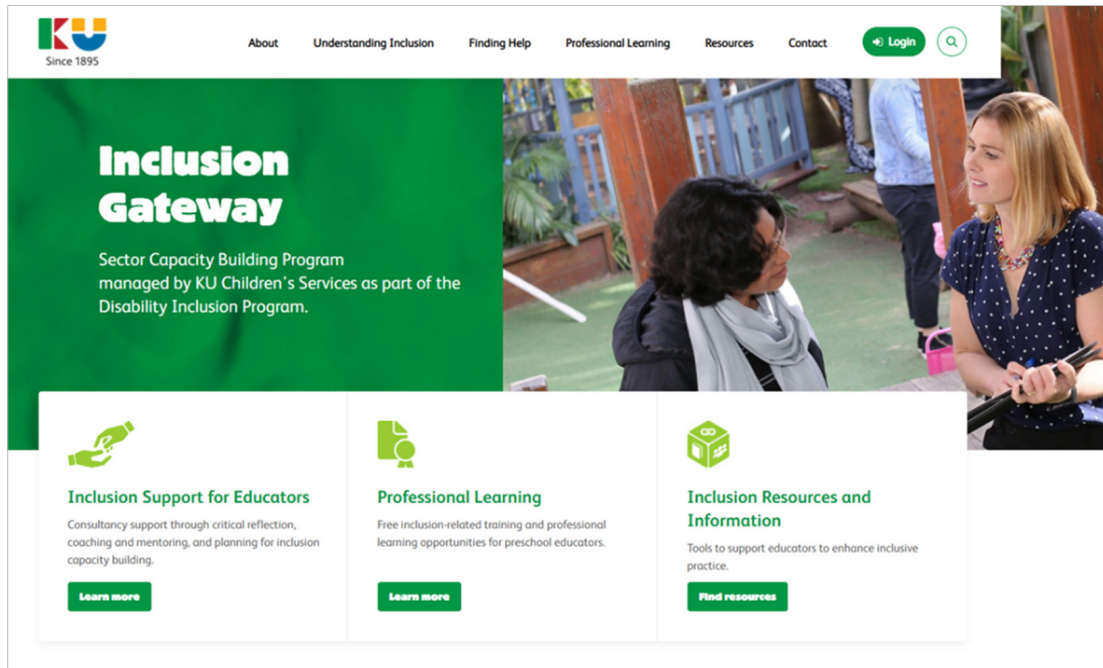
You can view full profiles of the whole team at <https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/contact>.



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.

Quick guide to the Inclusion Gateway website



www.kudisabilityinclusion.com.au

The KU Inclusion Gateway website has a wide range of free inclusion information, online professional development, podcasts and resources that can support you in your work with children and families.

We encourage your whole team to check out the Inclusion Gateway website regularly to view newly added material.

One new, easy log in for all preschools

We have streamlined access to the KU Inclusion Gateway website with a new login and password for all preschools to use:

Username: CommunityPreschool

Password: CommunityPreschool