

Inclusion Ready News

Term 2 2023



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From the Manager, KU Sector Capacity Building Program

Our team enjoyed working with preschools to support inclusion in preschools in Term 1 as you were getting to know the needs and strengths of children who have started attending in 2023.

In this issue of 'Inclusion Ready' we share a Preschool Director's reflection on the benefits of embedding inclusive practices. We also talk about how inclusion is championed in version 2 of the Early Years Learning Framework and let you know where to find out more. A practical strategy educators can use to support children's communication skills is also shared in this newsletter. You will also find information about upcoming professional development, conferences, newly released guidelines for autism and much more.



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

Thank you for your feedback about the KU Sector Capacity Building Program

Thank you to those of you who have completed the short survey and provided your feedback on your experience of KU's delivery of the Sector Capacity Building Program. The survey was distributed to each preschool in early Term 2 and closed on Wednesday 31 May. Survey responses help to guide the work we do with our preschools.

You are also always welcome to contact Emma Pierce (Manager, Sector Capacity Building Program) with any suggestions and comments by calling 0413 406 285 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 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 2 professional learning

KU Sector Capacity Building Program (SCB) webinars

For our full range of workshops and webinars, please keep an eye on 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:

- ▶ 'Building partnerships with families to develop a positive vision for their child' presented by Sylvana Mahmic
- ▶ 'The Power of Play' presented by Amie Sykes, Preschool Inclusion Consultant and certified Play Therapist

A range of face to face workshops are also being planned in different locations based on priorities identified in different regions.

Conference Watch

- ▶ **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

Simone Delagarde, Director at Emmerick Street Community Preschool, reflects on what supported change and development in inclusive practice at the preschool

At Emmerick Street Preschool we have been purposefully tuning into observing the diverse learning and regulation needs of the children in our class. This has led us on a path of trial-and-error by filtering regulation aids into diverse areas of the preschool. Some examples include blankets in book corner, a basket of sensory aids at group time and a basket outdoors in a tranquil space and cosy 'zen' areas.

Emotional and sensory supports

Regulation aids are accessible to all children, and we work with the class to reflect on if these aids are supporting our minds and bodies or making a situation feel more difficult. We talk about listening to our bodies and minds to guide us regarding what feels comfortable. Children have commented “the toy helps me to keep my body calm”, “the toy helps me to think”, “the toy makes my body move too much”.

We are teaching children to learn what works for them in a moment and to identify if they are feeling dysregulated. These open discussions are changing the ways we teach and learn together as children are more naturally seeking an aid out to support them for any given moment of the day.

The sensory aids have supported a feeling of each child having more of an equal access to learning and bringing themselves to a moment. There is more of a sense of equilibrium and a knowing amongst the class that everyone has individual needs to learn, thrive and grow. When the children experience the care and deliberate intention of tuning into their diverse learning needs, we are all gifted with that bit more of each child's essence.

We have noticed our environments are set up with a heavier focus on being busy and we are in the process of thinking about this with the children and learning more about what children may like to do when they need some space or quiet time.

Connections between home and preschool

We have also introduced the opportunity for children to keep a precious belonging with them throughout the day. This has had nothing but positive results in children sharing their special item, connecting in with others and using this item to enhance more of a sense of belonging. We have a basket for the precious items to live throughout particular times of the day or when children are not wanting them anymore.

It has been such a pleasure to learn from the children about what is important to them and how we can work more to honour and respect what they need to feel a sense of belonging at preschool.



A key communication strategy for educators



Are you finding that many of your families are having challenges in accessing speech therapy for their children? Educators play a key role in supporting communication skills development. In this issue we would like to highlight a practical strategy educators can utilise at preschool.

This strategy has been shared by Cahli Wall, a Preschool Inclusion Consultant for the Murrumbidgee Region who is certified to deliver the 'Learning Language and Loving It™ Hanen® Program' that supports educators to promote all children's communication skills development. OWL™ – Observe, wait and listen – is a strategy that can be used by all educators to start the journey of meaningful conversations with all children.

When implementing this strategy it might be helpful to consider:

- ▶ Using key word sign or visual supports in conjunction with verbal language to support communication with children who have developmental delays and/or language delays.
- ▶ Being face to face with children when communicating. This allows the child to see your face and for you to be able to read all their non-verbal cues as well as verbal conversations.
- ▶ Following the child's lead. If a child is driving a car along the floor, get down to their level and imitate the play.

Below is an example from the Hanen® tip sheet OWL™ with playdough:

Observe, Wait and Listen refers to...

Observe – the child and see what the child does. Observe silently, really watching to see what they are doing with the playdough. Often, children don't begin with an idea of what to do with the playdough. They manipulate it and when it starts to look like something they recognise, they may then start to turn it into something specific. To give the child time to come up with her own ideas, just observe without speaking, suggesting or instructing them.

Wait – sit quietly and avoid showing the child things they could do with the playdough. Just squeeze or roll your own playdough slowly. Your goal is to give the child an opportunity to do what THEY want to do FIRST.

Listen – to what they say, without interrupting. If they say something, respond and show interest, but avoid telling them what to do or try not to ask questions that test, such as “What are you doing?”, or “What are you making?” They may not know yet – they are still experimenting!

<https://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Fun-Activities/Preschooler-Playdough-Fun.aspx>

The Hanen® website has very helpful information for educators and families to support children’s literacy and communication. Hanen® Programs are research-based, group-oriented programs that teach participants practical strategies for encouraging children’s learning naturally in the context of everyday activities. You can learn more on their website: <https://www.hanen.org>.

More on language and communication

The KU Sector Capacity Building Program ‘Nurturing Communication’ Guidebook provides information to build educators competence and provide practical strategies to support children’s communication development. Download it from the KU Inclusion Gateway:

<https://www.kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/resources/nurturing-communication-guidebook>

If you have concerns about children’s speech, a good place to refer to is the ‘Communication Milestones Kit’ from Speech Pathology Australia:

https://speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/SPAweb/Resources_for_the_Public/Children_Communication_Milestones/SPAweb/Resources_for_the_Public/Communication_Milestones/Communication_Milestones.aspx

More great resources around supporting language and communication can be found here:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/health/wswlhd/services/speech-pathology>



Early Years Learning Framework Version 2.0 - 2022

What are the key changes in relation to inclusion in the updated EYLF?

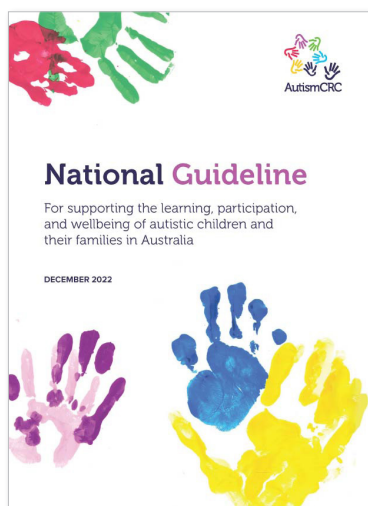
The KU Sector Capacity Building Program team have been working through the Early Years Learning Framework Version 2.0 to identify changes relating specifically to inclusion. An increased focus on diverse capabilities, disability, and inclusion is apparent in the many changes and additions to the updated framework across the principles, practices and outcomes and also in the legislative responsibilities in relation to inclusion.

The updated framework sees the expansion of the Principle – Equity, inclusion and high expectations. This principle addresses inclusive learning environments, reasonable adjustments, attitudinal and practical barriers as well as critical reflection whereby it is important to challenge practices that may be discriminatory and to support changes that lead to a more inclusive curriculum.

Beyond the principles, many changes have been made in relation to inclusion in the practices and outcomes of the EYLF. We have outlined these changes on the KU Inclusion Gateway website. We encourage you to unpack these changes with your team and in discussions with your Preschool Inclusion Consultant. You can find this at: <https://www.kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/understanding-inclusion/inclusion-and-the-eylf>

“Educators who are committed to equity recognise that all children have the right to participate in inclusive early childhood settings, regardless of their circumstances, strengths, gender, capabilities or diverse ways of doing and being” – AGDE, 2022, p.17

Best practice guidelines for Autism



The National Guideline for supporting the learning, participation, and wellbeing of autistic children and their families in Australia focuses on practitioners delivering supports in community and clinical settings.

The Guideline provides clear and consistent recommendations and practice points for practitioners who deliver supports to autistic children and their families, to ensure they are doing so in ways that are effective, safe and desirable to children and their families.

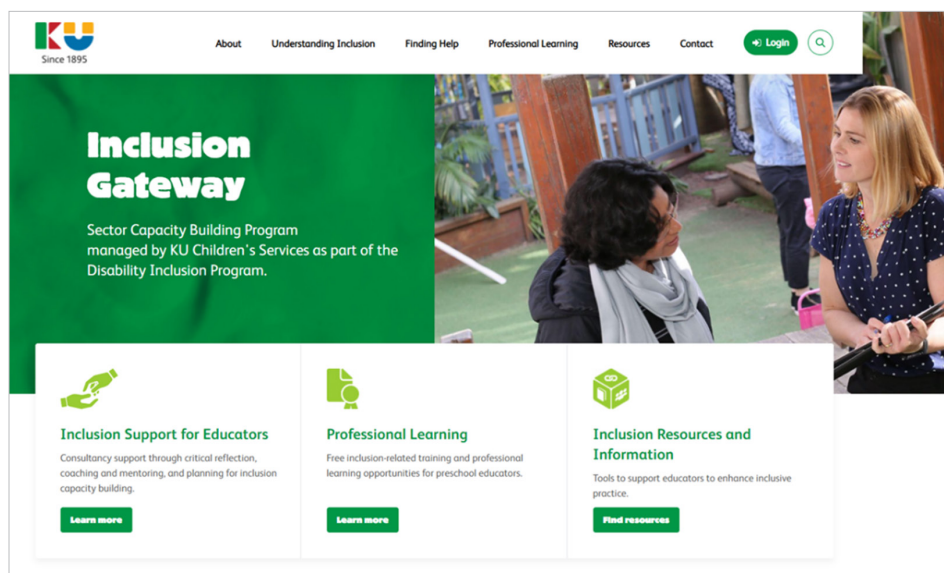
The Guideline is also a valuable resource for autistic individuals and their supporters, educators and families, organisations providing training to practitioners or students, and governments and other policy-making organisations.

See: <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/access/supporting-children>

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.

KU Inclusion Gateway



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

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.