

Inclusion Ready News

Term 3 2024



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From the Manager, KU NSW Sector Capacity Building Program

In our Term 3 issue of 'Inclusion Ready', we share information about a range of topics pertinent to your inclusion journey. You will find a piece about our upcoming 'Talking With Families: Shared Understandings of Development' resource and training. We also provide an article about Term 3 specific information on how educators can be supporting families of children with disabilities who are transitioning to school in 2025.

Thank you to all the preschools who responded to the annual Sector Capacity Building Program preschool survey. Your feedback will help us to continue to improve our work with you.



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

Disability and Inclusion Program Funding

Below are details of the 2024 cut off dates for High Learning Support Needs (HLSN) and Inclusive Environments (IE) funding applications.

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

2024 cut-off dates for HLSN & IE funding applications	Notification of outcome and payment dates
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 16 August 2024	Quarter 4 – October 2024
Submitted by 5:00pm Friday 11 October 2024	Final adjustments – December 2024*

**Funding for eligible applications will be paid in December and must be spent within the calendar year.*

For further information, please see the [Disability and Inclusion Program Funding Guidelines](#).

Upcoming Professional Learning

You will find all our upcoming webinars and workshops listed under '[Upcoming Events](#)'.

A range of face-to-face workshops and inclusion networking sessions are also being planned in various locations based on regional priorities, so please keep an eye on your email for registration details. All our Sector Capacity Building Program (SCB) 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

Coming up in 2024

- ▶ 2024 Early Childhood Australia (ECA) National Conference, 17 -20 September, Brisbane - “Realising the Vision: An integrated future for the early years”.



What’s new on the KU Inclusion Gateway website

Webinar recordings

Supporting the Anxious Child Webinar

You or your colleagues may have missed our Term 1 webinar on ‘Supporting the Anxious Child’ presented by Marina Bailey, psychologist. This webinar provided some practical strategies to support children who may be experiencing feelings of anxiousness and the diverse ways these feelings can impact on social and emotional development. Marina also addressed how educators can work in partnership with families to support these children and build emotional resilience.

Please find the link to the webinar recording [here](#).

For more information on this topic please contact your local Preschool Inclusion Consultant.



Responsive Routines and Transitions

It was wonderful to see so many educators join our live webinar: ‘Critically Reflecting on Responsive Routines and Transitions.’ This webinar showcased the newly updated KU SCBP ‘Responsive Routines and Transitions Tool’ (RRTT) which is designed to support a whole team approach to critical reflection on routines and transitions. In this webinar we hear from Angie Walton, Director of Integricare Strathfield Preschool, who talks about her team’s journey with their Preschool Inclusion Consultant, Jennifer Day, reflecting on their routines and transitions. Belinda Fellingham, KU Preschool Inclusion Consultant, talks through the tool and explains how you can use it to continuously improve your service’s current inclusive practices. Please find a direct link to the webinar [here](#).

You can download the reflective tool [here](#).

Please contact your allocated Preschool Inclusion Consultant to discuss the updated RRTT further.



Transition to School for Children with Disabilities

The SCB team have created a dedicated space on the KU SCB Inclusion Gateway for information to support educators with transitions to school for children with disabilities. View this page [here](#). This new space provides information relating to:

- ▶ When can children start school?
- ▶ Recommended timeline
- ▶ School options – NSW Public Schools
- ▶ School options – independent school systems
- ▶ Helpful resources

Below, you will find a handy guide to what you can be doing as educators and how you can be supporting families to ensure a smooth transition to school for children in your preschool during Term 3. This timeline will be a regular feature of our newsletter each term.

Important activities for Term 3 of the year prior to starting school

Educators can:

- Meet with the child's family to discuss progress with the enrolment process for their preferred school/support class. Note their child's strengths, preferences, and support needs in the preschool environment to help them to consider school options.
- Ensure that families have scheduled any assessments required for school placement.
- Provide any additional information that may be relevant to a particular school option e.g., access to assisted transport. Refer to Reimagine Australia's Ready, Set, School resource available on the KU Inclusion Gateway website.
- Complete the Transition to School Statement sharing information about the child's strengths, needs and strategies that have worked to support this child's inclusion and participation.
- Continue to review the child's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals in collaboration with the child's family and others involved and ensure that at least one goal relates directly to the transition to school process.
- Liaise/meet with the school and family to plan for a smooth transition for children with disabilities or additional needs.
- Use the Starting School Social Script Templates available [here](#) on the KU SCBP Inclusion Gateway website to help prepare the child to start school. Encourage the family and receiving school to individualise these scripts with photos and information from each child's school.

Support families to:

- Consider offers of school placement and ensure that any offers are received in writing before declining others.
- Discuss with the school, the school's application for individualised funding if appropriate.
- Complete any assessments required for enrolment.
- Meet with the Learning and Support Teacher (LAST) and team at a public school, or a equivalent team at independent or Catholic schools. Exchange information, discuss transition and orientation plans.
- Ask advice from the school about how to best prepare their child for a successful start to school e.g. check if there is a school information booklet/ or already developed story about the school to share with their child.

For more information, please contact your Preschool Inclusion Consultant.

The Transition to School for Children with Disabilities page [here](#) on the KU SCB Program Inclusion Gateway website also has links to further information.

Moving beyond quality on the road to inclusion

Interview: Gowrie NSW Shirley Road Director, Stefanie Overton

Shirley Road’s preschool’s philosophy in relation to inclusion:

Gowrie Shirley Road’s vision and philosophy centre around children’s agency and our image of children as being active participants in their communities. Inclusion is the thread that supports a sense of belonging and ownership over everyone’s day at preschool and it is the belief that we all have a voice, and a role to play here regardless of ability, gender, age, race etc. We are inclusive of everyone and respect and value each other’s differences and truly celebrate everyone’s uniqueness. Everyone here at Gowrie Shirley Road feels a sense of true ownership and belonging. In addition, as educators, we can honestly say that our children must feel this sense of belonging as their behaviours demonstrate a strong sense of wellbeing and regulation.



Continuously improving inclusive practices:

Inclusion is not just something we say or believe in, it is something we act upon every day. A huge focus for us is understanding and supporting each child’s strengths, interests, learning dispositions and needs, especially their sensory needs. Our approach is never “a one size fits all” approach.

When a child is regulated and has the resources that match their learning dispositions such as visuals supports, sensory play, and movement breaks, they are able to thrive and grow. We developed a permanent sensory space that allows children to choose the sensory material they wish to explore (kinetic sand, rice, goop, shaving cream). We find this is integral to supporting a sense of regulation.



Many of our children are visual learners and we have embedded the use of visual supports to provide predictability and a sense of security through their transition and self-help routines.

In addition, we ensure our small group times are intentionally planned to maximise engagement including where we have groups in our play space. Some children have their group outdoors where there is less stimulation, others have designated spaces they know to go to for sitting and engaging.

Inclusion is our baseline practice, and we continually reflect on this individually through our programming as well as in conversation with the team and families. Our Self-Assessment Tool always includes a goal around this as well as our term objectives. We attend professional development to learn more and work alongside our KU SCB Consultant and Allied Health professionals supporting our children.

Shirley Road’s inclusion goals for the coming year:

We are working with many children with diverse language needs this year so we are keen to find more ways to support inclusive communication.

We want to continue to learn more about how we can support regulation and children’s individual sensory needs including expanding our “inclusion toolbox” and communicating this more effectively with families.

NEW RESOURCE

Talking with Families: Sharing Understandings of Development

The KU SCB Team is excited to announce a new addition to our collection of guidebooks. In Term 2 we held a series of face to face workshops on the topic of “Talking with Families: Shared Understandings of Development” where we introduced this new resource.

The new guidebook covers topics including:

- ▶ Family-centred practice
- ▶ Models of disability for inclusive preschools
- ▶ Unpacking the notion of families being “in-denial”
- ▶ Educator understanding and supporting families through the stages of change
- ▶ Planting the seed with early conversations
- ▶ Practical suggestions for successful parent meetings
- ▶ Positive communication strategies
- ▶ Linking families with additional support
- ▶ Advocating for inclusion



Download the new resource [here](#).

This guidebook presents a range of information and strategies to support you to work in partnership with families with a shared goal of achieving the best outcomes for their child who may be developing differently. We will present an approach for working collaboratively to share our knowledge as early childhood professionals, and to learn from families as the experts on their child and family. This approach is based upon family-centred practice and the social model of disability.

Over the past year, the team at San Souci Preschool Kindergarten have been building their capacity to talk with families in relation to sharing information on the children’s development. Through information gathered at the South East Sydney KU SCB workshop last year, the ongoing support of their Sector Capacity Building Consultant, Belinda Fellingham, and critical reflection as a team, they have built their confidence and capacity to talk with families. *“Our staff team now have a better understanding of the importance of considering where the parents are before discussing their child’s development and any related concerns. Developing a friendly and trusting relationship with the parent is the first step we aim for so we can get a picture of the family situation and know when and how to approach the conversation” – Jan Elder, Director.*

What is family-centred practice?

Family-centred practice “is a set of values, skills, behaviours and knowledge that recognises the central role of families in children’s lives.” When educators adopt a strengths-based, family-centred approach, they work in partnership with families to plan to support children’s learning and growth. Families are recognised as the constant experts on their child, and family life, family choices, and priorities drive decision making.

(Early Childhood Intervention Australia, 2016, p.8).

Preschool Inclusion Consultants in focus



Belinda Monkman
Illawarra Senior Preschool Inclusion Consultant

What do you find most inspiring about your role as a Preschool Inclusion Consultant?

I am always inspired by the teams of educators that I work with. I am inspired by seeing the way they come together with diverse perspectives, ideas, and opinions, but with the common goal of creating a positive preschool experience for every child. They collaborate and compromise, bravely stepping out of their comfort zones and trying new things. Educators who work so hard, all for the benefit of the children that come through their preschools each year.

What does inclusion mean to you?

To me inclusion means every child, or person, being valued for what they bring to the preschool and the community. Inclusion in a preschool means making changes to our expectations and environments, so that every child can be a happy and successful preschooler without needing to change who they are as a person. Early childhood educators have such an important role in educating a new generation of Australians who can go on to champion difference and diversity as a positive part of a great community.



Maree Rusconi
Murrumbidgee Preschool Inclusion Consultant

What do you find most inspiring about your role as a Preschool Inclusion Consultant?

My role as a Preschool Inclusion Consultant offers me the opportunity to join preschool teams on a shared learning journey of inclusion and inclusive practice.

What inspires me? The richness of diversity across the preschools I visit and how their philosophies guide and support their connections to children, families, and the community; the willingness of preschools to share knowledge and practice; and the strength and determination shown by educators to advocate for the inclusion of all children, despite challenges.

What does Inclusion mean to you?

From birth we are connected to our families and communities. We have the right to be included in the world around us and to have our unique strengths and abilities recognised and supported. Inclusion means respecting and valuing difference by ensuring that everyone has equitable access to resources and opportunities that allow them to thrive and to participate.

When children and families feel respected and valued by their early childhood environment, they will develop a true sense of 'belonging.'

Happy retirement Heather Morse



At the end of June, we bid farewell to Heather Morse who is retiring after a long and successful career in early childhood education and early childhood intervention.

Heather has worked with KU's Sector Capacity Building Program team since its beginning in 2018. She has generously shared her substantial knowledge and experience widely across our team and with every educator she has supported through the program.

We wish Heather every happiness as she leaves us to spend more time with her gorgeous granddaughters, travel and to undertake some volunteering opportunities.

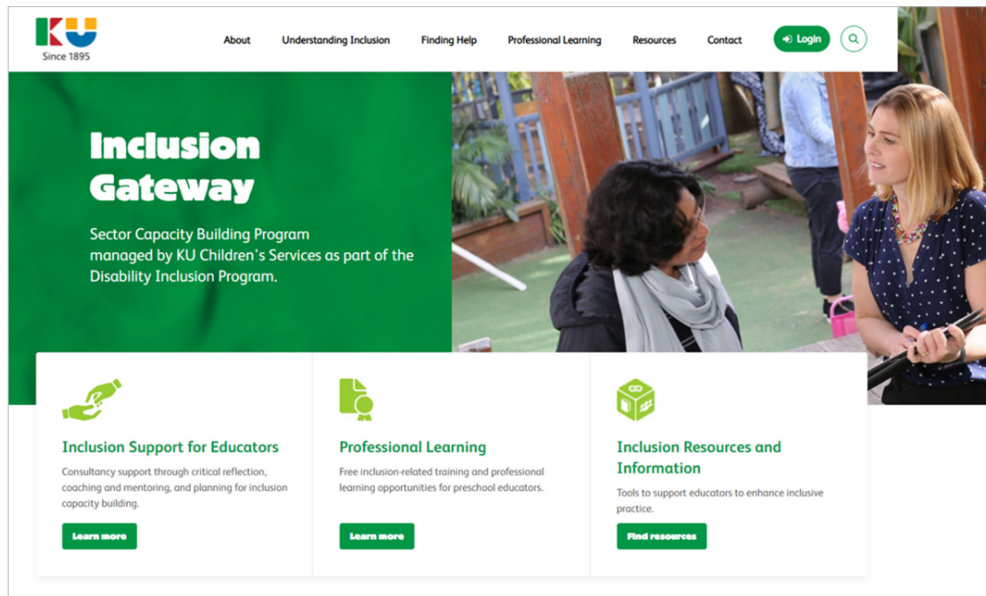
We will miss Heather very much but feel very fortunate to have worked with her.

The Preschool Inclusion Consultant Team

Our team of experienced early childhood teachers, many of whom also have qualifications in inclusive or special education, are available to support you with your preschool's disability inclusion needs. You can work with your Preschool Inclusion Consultant to plan ahead to enhance your preschool's inclusive practices and as new inclusion questions arise.



KU Inclusion Gateway Website



Access a wide range of free inclusion resources and professional learning on the KU Inclusion Gateway website.

A login is no longer required.

www.kudisabilityinclusion.com.au

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 NSW Sector Capacity Building Program. Contact your consultant directly or go to <https://kudisabilityinclusion.com.au/contact>.