

Inclusion Matters

Issue 2, 2022



Inclusion Support QLD

Supporting educators in early childhood education
and care services to include all children

From the State Manager of Inclusion Support QLD

Welcome to the second edition of Inclusion Matters for 2022.

The early childhood education and care sector (ECEC) has continued to experience the impacts of COVID-19 which has placed significant challenges on families, early childhood educators and services. Inclusion Support QLD (ISQ) has been working closely with ECEC services and in the last 6 months has provided inclusion support to educators in 2913 care environments through a combination of phone, online and physical face to face visits.

It is important that we continue to advocate for our profession, and one way we can all do this is to use the same language that correctly reflects the crucial role the early childhood sector has in the lives of young children and their families.

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has produced a document: *How to talk about early childhood*

education and care that gives an overview of the language that reflects the importance of the ECEC sector. The document can be accessed at: <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/How-to-talk-about-ECEC.pdf>



Thank you to the educators who completed our Inclusion Support QLD annual service survey and provided feedback on our service delivery and insightful ideas on what educators would like included in our editions of Inclusion Matters. In response, this issue includes practical inclusion ideas and strategies that we hope you will find useful, including using visual supports, Calm Down cards and a closer look at what inclusion feels, sounds, and looks like.

In this issue, educators share their knowledge and thoughts on embracing culture to support a strong sense of identity and “Being Brave and Making change” through meaningful cultural experiences as they contribute to achieving a reconciled Australia.

ISQ look forward to continuing to support you on your inclusion journey and recognise the crucial role you play in the lives of young children and their families.

Soraya Apps
State Manager, Inclusion Support QLD



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Acronyms used in Inclusion Matters

ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
IP	Inclusion Professional
ISQ	Inclusion Support Queensland
MTOP	My Time Our Place
NQS	National Quality Standard
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
SIP	Strategic Inclusion Plan

Inclusion Support Queensland acknowledges the First Peoples of Australia as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the many Lands on which we work, live and play.

We pay respect to Elder's past, present and emerging, as they continue to share their knowledge to preserve their histories, cultures, and stories for future generations.

We respect their deep spiritual connection to their Lands, waters, and communities, and we are committed to assisting educators in their learning and journey towards a reconciled Australia.

What is inclusion?



Inclusion is not about 'fixing' a child or improving their skills so that they fit into the environment, it is about changing what educators do so that all children can participate. Diversity is acknowledged, respected and viewed as a resource for learning, growth and change.

What does Inclusion look like?

- ▶ Being able to make mistakes
- ▶ Children making real choices
- ▶ Children's needs are met
- ▶ Educators are responsive to children changing interests and capabilities

What does Inclusion sound like?

- ▶ Children's voices are heard and respected
- ▶ Educators use calm, confident, respectful voices
- ▶ Bias and stereotypes are challenged
- ▶ Educators, children and families are speaking home languages

What does Inclusion feel like?

- ▶ Children feel a sense of belonging, confidence, and a sense of agency
- ▶ Educators feel connected to children
- ▶ Environments feel calm and engaged

Inclusion is not something you just do, it needs to be part of who you are.



Top 5 Tips for Inclusion

Inclusion in Action Forums have been held across QLD. Educators from Mackay shared their top 5 tips for inclusion after attending an Inclusion in Action Forum.

- ▶ “Think about why the child is behaving in a way you find challenging rather than what disruption the behaviour is causing.”
- ▶ “Introducing social stories has made morning drop off more settled and the transitions throughout the day are calmer.”
- ▶ “Look at all the walls and the surfaces within your service, can you take away some of the clutter?”
- ▶ “We went back to the service and made visuals to use with all the children. They even use them with each other.”
- ▶ “Review routines, are they child-focused or educator focused?”

Did you know?

- ▶ Did you know 1746 ECEC services have a current Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) in QLD? Does your service have a SIP?
- ▶ Did you know 2009 children are currently being supported to access and participate in quality, inclusive programs in QLD through loans of sensory items from the Specialist Equipment Library?
- ▶ Have you seen the recently released Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data? Around 1 in 5 children were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain in 2021. How does this compare with your community?

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/>



Are you using visual supports with all children?

What are visual supports?

Visual supports are tools used to increase our understanding of language, the environment, expectations and to provide structure and support. They are a valuable inclusive practice.

Children benefit from information and real objects that they can see, as it can enhance and support the communication process. Using visual supports alongside verbal cues can provide children with time to process what is being communicated and to respond.

Adults also use visual supports daily to improve their understanding of the world and to help them organise information e.g., shopping lists, stop signs, calendars and maps.



How could I use visuals to support all children?

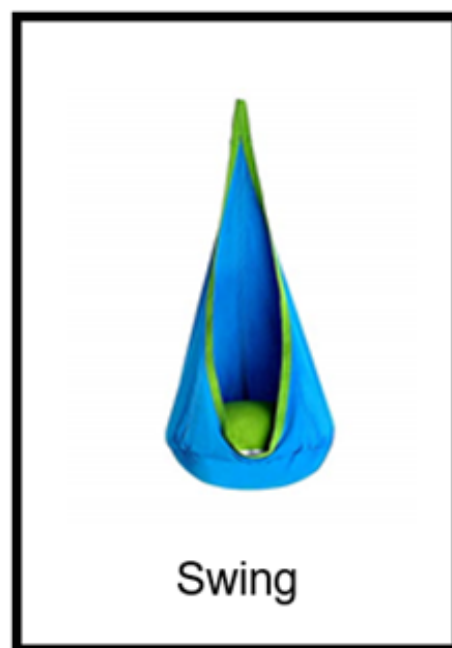
- ▶ Prompt cards to cue children e.g., mealtime or toilet
- ▶ A visual schedule to set out your routine for the day
- ▶ Choice boards to support decision making
- ▶ Regulation boards to support co-regulation
- ▶ Social stories to explain social situations and the associated behavioural expectations
- ▶ First/ then boards to identify the need to complete the current task before moving onto the next activity
- ▶ Task sequence to support independence e.g., steps to washing hands



A set of “Calm Down” visual support cards have been included in this edition to support children to self-regulate

How could I introduce the “Calm Down” visual support cards provided?

- ▶ Cut the “Calm Down” cards into individual cards, you may choose to laminate them
- ▶ Start by introducing a card which is appropriate to your environment and resources
- ▶ Use the cue card with a verbal prompt and the actual item e.g. “You want to swing?” while holding the swing and showing the swing card
- ▶ Once the children associate the card with the object/ action, add it to the calm down box for children to access when required
- ▶ Continue to introduce relevant cards and add the cards to the calm down box
- ▶ What other cards could you make to support children’s self-regulation in your environment?



Ask your
Inclusion Professional
about our new visual posters
designed to support you to
critically reflect on how visual
supports could be used to
support all children in
your service.

Understanding visual supports

What can educators do?

Visual supports are tools that are used to increase our understanding of language, the environment, expectations and provide structure and support.

Educators	Knowledge	Family/Community	Children's Inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What visual supports am I using to support children's communication? ▶ How can visual supports be used with all children? ▶ What makes visuals meaningful to the children in the care environment setting? ▶ When using visual supports, what other type of prompts might I need to use? <p><i>Tip: Consider how visuals and real objects can be used in combination with clear, concise verbal cues.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Am I confident to use visuals? Do I need to build my capacity to use them effectively? ▶ Who can I connect with to build my knowledge and capacity around implementing visual supports? ▶ Are there educators in my service who have strengths using visual supports? E.g. key word signing, picture cues, social stories. <p><i>Tip: Connect with Inclusion Professionals, parents and therapists to share knowledge, experience and practical strategies.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What visuals are the family using at home, and have we implemented these at our service to support consistency? ▶ Are the visual supports being used in a way that is respectful of the families' values and beliefs? ▶ Are there community supports the family is accessing that could support my capacity to implement visual strategies effectively? <p><i>Tip: A strong relationship with a child will support communication using visuals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How can visual supports be used to build a child's independence? ▶ Are visual supports being used to build communication and connections between peers? ▶ How are visuals used with the whole group to ensure that all children are building their capacity to communicate with their peers? ▶ How do children access and use visual supports in both the indoor and outdoor environments? <p><i>Tip: Consider the amount of visual stimulus in the environment.</i></p>

Where can I access support?
Talk with your Inclusion Professional
Phone 1800 811 035 Visit www.inclusionsupportqld.org.au

The Australian Government funded Inclusion Agency is managed by KU Children's Services, in partnership with Cairns and District Child Care Development Association Inc.

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Visual Impairment

Consider

How do my values impact on the way I view a child's behaviour?

Do I see behaviour as being curious, communicating a need or 'naughty'?

Act

Document barriers, strategies, and actions within the Strategic Inclusion Plan. For support, talk with your Inclusion Professional.

Phone **1800 811 035**

Visit www.inclusionsupportqld.org.au

Question

What do I know about each child's family background, traditions, and beliefs?

What opportunities are there to obtain this type of information?

Understanding Behaviour

Understanding behaviour can be a barrier to inclusion when caring for children.

Take a moment to consider what the behaviour might be communicating and how a shift in thinking and practice could support positive changes.

Observe

As we build meaningful relationships with children it is important to observe and be responsive to their needs.

Do I watch for verbal, and non-verbal cues that a child is becoming withdrawn, finding it difficult to interact positively or participate in groups?

Reflect

Do I respond in a supportive way rather than react to behaviour?

Am I aware of my body language, tone of voice, volume, and language?

Ponder

The physical environment is never simply a backdrop but an essential part of our programming and development that influences what and how children learn. Are my environments rich with built-in learning opportunities that support children to explore, discover and reflect on who they are and the places they can go?

Examine

How am I communicating positive behavioural expectations with children?

Should we expect children to share?

What are our expectations of children when it comes to sharing? Are they realistic? Age appropriate? Would you be willing to give your car to a stranger for a turn?

The truth is toddlers don't yet understand the concept of sharing, and we often say 'share,' but what we really mean is, 'give what you have to another child.' A parent educator, Janet Lansbury asks us to reflect on why a child would want to 'share' his red truck when it means giving up the truck to someone else?

Another parent educator, Heather Shumaker, explains in her book, *It's Ok Not to Share*, 'from the point of view of the child who has the toy, he needs to experience control over that toy, and needs you, to recognize that the play that he is engaged in matters to him. It might not seem like a big deal to you that he gives up his toy to another kid to play with, but to a young child, all sorts of thoughts and feelings may be running through his body. We need to protect and promote our child's right to play and not pressure them to give up the thing they are currently engaged in without good reason'.

So how can we support children's social, emotional and communication development and help them co-regulate?

- ▶ Model generosity e.g., *"let's share this umbrella."*
- ▶ Acknowledge generosity when children demonstrate it e.g., *"it was kind of you to share those books with Sarah."*
- ▶ Encourage no pressure turn taking e.g., *"when you have finished with the truck, Leisa would like to have a turn, she has been patiently waiting."*
- ▶ Promote agency e.g., *"Arad is using the magnets right now, you could tell him you'd like to use them when he's finished."*
- ▶ Support visual learners with visual cues such as "my turn/ I'm waiting" cards, and sand, liquid, or time timers.
- ▶ Acknowledge and label feelings, e.g., *"you seem frustrated."*

Most importantly, we must be patient and trust that children will learn to share in time.



Celebrating Torres Strait Island's Floral Fridays

“Celebrating Torres Strait Islands Floral Friday has been a great starting place for our service. It has enabled us to bring the vibrant diversity of the Torres Strait Islander culture into our learning environments and encouraged us to further explore other Torres Strait Islander customs and traditions, educating ourselves and our children towards becoming more culturally competent and confident.” Director Lee Green.

During reflective conversations with her Inclusion Professional (IP), the Director of Goodstart Burleigh Waters ELC, Lee, identified that while the service held knowledge around Aboriginal culture, they had limited insight into the Torres Strait Islander culture.

Unsure where to start, they worked collaboratively with their IP on their Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) and chose a strategy to acknowledge and embed Torres Strait Island culture into the service. Educators began by introducing Floral Fridays into their weekly program. Floral Friday is a tradition on Torres Strait Island where everyone wears floral for the day. Educators and families embraced the tradition, and it was such a meaningful, fun way to bring colour and joy into the day while promoting communication and culture.

Lee and her team are eager to continue their learning around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.



Through the development of their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), they have committed to thinking more holistically when embedding Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and they want to continue to ensure educators remain culturally aware and confident to embed these perspectives into their programs.

The Early Years Learning Framework asks educators to consider the 'culture and context of family as central to children's sense of being and belonging, and to their success in lifelong learning' (EYLF, 2009, p.16).



Director Lee Green, ECT Dani Spooner and Assistant Director Leila Muraczewski

How could your service create a greater understanding of the culture and context of Torres Strait Island perspectives?

- ▶ Fly the Torres Strait Islander flag together with the Aboriginal and Australian flags
- ▶ Yarn about what the colours of the flag mean
- ▶ Celebrate Coming of the Light on 1st July
- ▶ Engage in NAIDOC experiences from 3rd to 10th July
- ▶ Celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on 4th August
- ▶ Display a map of the Torres Strait Islands and yarn about the names
- ▶ Display posters or photos of the islands, people, and marine life
- ▶ Learn about marine life, birdlife and the connection to the people's lives including turtles, fish, dugongs, sharks, seabirds, saltwater crocodiles
- ▶ Include fishing activities such as magnet fishing games or make your own with sticks and string into the program
- ▶ Borrow sea creatures and birds from the QLD Museum
- ▶ Learn about the uses of coconut and coconut shells
- ▶ Investigate and use greetings with children and families, 'sew ngapa' (hello), 'yawo' (goodbye) and 'kaikai' (food or to eat)
- ▶ Make Torres Strait Island drums and kalup seed or shell shakers
- ▶ Listen, sing or dance to Torres Strait Islander music
- ▶ Sing Tabá Naba as an acknowledgement
- ▶ Make necklaces and bracelets with seeds, beads, feathers and other natural items
- ▶ Thread material, paper or real flowers to make a lei (floral necklace)
- ▶ Make masks and headdresses from cardboard feathers, string, shells, seeds and leaves
- ▶ Carve designs into a flat block of clay or playdough, dry and paint or use as a printing block
- ▶ Engage children in weaving experiences using paper strips or pandanus palm leaves to make baskets, placemats or fish
- ▶ Cook coconut fish curry, Semur chicken, Sop Sop, coconut pumpkin rice, coconut custard or other delicious recipes
- ▶ Connect with Torres Strait Island community members and Elders



For more resources on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives scan here

Being Brave and Making Change for Reconciliation Week

“Inclusion Support QLD came together to share their commitment to ‘Be Brave, Make Change’ in their journey towards a reconciled Australia. The Inclusion Professionals had the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives while designing a Sea of Hands.”

Soraya Apps,
State Manager Inclusion Support QLD.



“We talked to the children about our Butchulla lore during our whole centre daily acknowledgement. Together we did handprints and sent them to head office with messages of reconciliation. This is our Sea of Hands on display in the Brisbane.”

Kerry Tatchell,
Director Wondunna Long Day Care Centre.

“We celebrated reconciliation week with a Sea of Hands that was on display through the week with families being encouraged to create their own hand and plant it. Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was also published on 27th May 2022, which was great timing to demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. It was truly an inspiring week and demonstrated our journey and commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our community.”

Sue Weymouth,
Director St Michaels College Early Learning Centre.





“Our Kindy children decided the best way to be brave and make change was to protect the land of the Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi people and to pick up the litter in our area. We went for a walk and what did we see? Lots of rubbish. We made change by respecting the lands of the Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi people and caring for the land.”

Adelle Grams,
service Manager Currimundi Childcare and
Education Centre.

“Our centre acknowledged National Reconciliation Week with a community “Sea of Hands”. This initiated many rich conversations and participation from our community with over 300 hands. That is 300 conversations learning about our shared histories, cultures and achievements and how each of us can contribute to achieving Reconciliation in Australia.”

Alana McHugh,
Centre Director Goodstart Moreton Downs.



“We learned Yugambeh language for animals and numbers, read Dreamtime stories and created a yarnning wall and Sea of Hands.”

Charmaine Guymer,
Assistant Director AB Paterson Early Childhood Centre.

“We made a poster and held a conversation with a local Bulu Yabun Aunty Christine about inclusive language and reconciliation.”

Elizabeth Blundell,
Coordinator Helping Hands Bribie Island.



Embracing culture to support children's strong sense of identity

Inclusion Support QLD hosted a professional conversation to provide an opportunity for, educators to reflect on how to include children from different cultural backgrounds. Below are some of the insightful thoughts educators shared.

In your workplace and community, what does it look like to belong? What does it mean to you? How do you know you belong?

"It's important to feel like you belong, that people are taking an interest in your life outside of work and knowing things that are important to you. We celebrate colleagues' birthdays and know we can share both good and difficult times."

"Many families will say, 'we don't have a culture, we are just Australian'. They forget that culture is family and often think you must come from another country to have culture."

How do you gather information about children in relation to their culture? How do you use that information to inform practice and planning?

"During the enrolment process and as a yearly update we have a child profile form which asks questions about the children's family including cultural considerations, such as beliefs, values, food preferences and fears. Information is shared with all staff at the service which assists our planning for new families to ensure they feel welcome and have a positive experience."

"Each child has a "passport" in their room which contains a photo, where they were born or where their parents were born, languages spoken at home and a flag of their country, some even have a picture of a home cooked meal."

"We had a situation where a child would not settle at rest time, and we were unsure why. We had a conversation with the family, and we discovered that the family always sing a song before going to sleep, so the family taught the educators the song in their home language which educators now use to settle the child to sleep and it has worked well."

What are some practical ideas that educators can do to encourage children and their families to feel confident to share their connection to their culture while at the service so that it continues to remain strong?

"We have a roster system for families to come in and do a book reading from their heritage, occasionally sing a song or cook a meal with us. We also encourage families to bring a plate of food to share when we celebrate occasions such as Mother's Day or Halloween. We invite families to provide us with words in their home language, along with the phonetic pronunciation of them, for mealtimes and food, routines, and greetings."

"We have placed children's family photos around the rooms and have images on display in play areas to provoke children's curiosity and display diversity relevant to the play area e.g., block corner."

What can educators do to include the use of children's first languages throughout their day?

"Explain to families how important it is for children to hear their own language both at home and the service. Families will see that their home language is valued which will promote a sense of pride in their cultural and linguistic heritage. Continuing to use home language alongside their new language will make the process of learning English faster."

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