

Inclusion Matters

Issue 1, 2023



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 first Edition of Inclusion Matters for 2023.

It has been such a positive start to 2023 with all Australian, state and territory Education Ministers collectively approving updates to Australia's two national approved learning frameworks in acknowledgement of the continued importance of supporting high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC). We have also seen a significant increase in services actively engaging with their Inclusion Professional (IP) in Strategic Inclusion planning.

We are excited to announce that 1,959 ECEC services have a current Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) which is proudly displayed in services throughout Queensland in recognition to their commitment to inclusion planning.

Our Specialist Equipment Library (SEL) has continued to see an increase in service requests for equipment, with many services taking the opportunity to trial some of our sensory equipment. In the last 6 months our SEL has supported over 2,556 children.

In this issue, Blackwater Community Childcare share how borrowing a sensory pod led to the innovative idea to set up 'Duyans' throughout their outdoor environment as a strategy to support children's self-regulation.

We Belong Family Day Care also share their innovative solutions project that moved them 'Beyond Behaviour' and a 'Moment with Me' provides a range of insights into cultural perspectives for further reflection.

This year ISQ is excited to release a series of podcasts including 'Quality Inclusive Practices' with Rhonda Livingstone from ACECQA and our new resource poster, 'A Whole Learning Approach to Trauma Sensitive Practice' which is available on our ISQ website.

ISQ looks forward to continuing to support you on your inclusion journey and our 2023 star is now available in recognition of your continued commitment to strategic inclusion planning in 2023.



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.

Inclusion is a Right



Inclusion is a right not a nice or charitable thing to do for children. The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has recently released a suite of resources to help services understand their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

If a child's enrolment is not accepted because of their disability, or they are prevented from attending the service or participating in the educational program because of their disability, then this is discrimination.

Services are required to make reasonable adjustments to address barriers to access and participation so all children can access and fully participate in the service. This could include using visual supports, implementing strategies to support sensory needs, making adjustments to the routine and accessing additional support or resources such as those provided through our program.

If you would like support to reflect and plan for reasonable adjustments for children in your service, you can contact your Inclusion Professional.

The new ACECQA resources to understand your obligations under the DDA include fact sheets, posters, and information sheets.

You can find them here:



Do you have a Duyan?

Blackwater Community Childcare Centre borrowed a sensory pod through Specialist Equipment Library for use in the Kindergarten environment. The pod was to be used as a quiet space for children seeking a retreat to self-regulate.

The challenge was to find a safe space to hang the pod in the room. Educators in the Kindergarten space decided that it was safer to use the pod in the outdoor space as there was plenty of room and trees that could be used to hang the pod. The educators noticed that the pod was very popular among all age groups that shared the same outdoor space, and this became an issue as children had to wait for long periods of time to have a turn on the pod.

One of the educators decided to make a “Duyan”. A Duyan is similar to a hammock and is used in the Philippines to support babies to sleep. These are made out of large sheets or material, and they are typically hung from low ceilings. Mothers place their babies in the Duyan and gently rock them to sleep. When babies are placed in the Duyan it provides a similar feeling to being in the womb providing baby warmth and comfort.

After creating a few Duyan’s educators noticed that a lot of the children started using this space as a place to escape from the noise and self-regulate. Some children who display challenging behaviours began to use this space regularly. Educators began setting up books and sensory toys in this space. While the sensory pod had to be returned, the Duyan continues to be included within the outdoor environment.



Contact your Inclusion Professional to see how sensory equipment could support all children in your service.

A Moment with Me...

Creating a sense of belonging comes with our connection and relationships with families, educators and the community. This information can help shape our program, practices and cultural inclusion within the service.

Below are cultural profiles completed by a range of different families and educators to share some of their key cultural perspectives. Take a moment read through and reflect. How can I gain this knowledge? How are educators using this information to intentionally plan to include all children?

My name is: Hari Paudel

I live with: My husband and 2 children

At home we speak languages: Nepali

When I eat, I use: My right hand and I sit on the floor

We celebrate: Teej which is all about inviting sisters for dinner and dancing and Dashain which is about food and blessings from families. We also celebrate our god's birthday, holi and pooja at home.

Something important to our family is: celebrating our festivals and maintaining our culture and language. Our grieving process is 13 days long with restrictions on food and touching others. We live in a caste system and our religion is Hindu.

Something I love about my culture is: Maintaining our good relationships with all family, respect for all elders and food and gifts.

Something an ECEC service could do to embed my culture is: Call female teachers didi (aunty) and male teachers dada (uncle) as a sign of respect, children do not use adult names.



What celebrations and festivals do we celebrate throughout the year? How do we value the significance of each celebration and share these with all children?



My name is: Shaylarnah Nahow

I live with: My big brother Nathaniel, little brother Jayvon and my mum

At home we speak languages: English

When I eat, I use: A spoon and a fork

We celebrate: Birthdays, Christmas and New Year

We sleep: With mummy because I'm a bit scared to sleep by myself

Something important to our family is: Being together and supporting each other

Something I love about my culture is: Dancing and singing

Something an ECEC service could do to embed my culture is: More cultural songs and activities



Find out more about building belonging here:



Eid al-Fitr, The “Feast of Fast-Breaking” Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, and is celebrated during the first three days of Shawwāl.

My name is: Ammara Afzal

I live with: My husband and three daughters

At home we speak languages: English and Urdu

When I eat, I use: Cutlery and use my fingers to eat chapati (flat bread) with curries

We celebrate: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha

We sleep: In our own bedrooms

Something important to our family is: Family mealtimes, especially dinner time, we all sit together as a family to enjoy our dinner

Something I love about my culture is: Extended family all living together

Something an ECEC service could do to embed my culture is: Introduce Pakistani food on the menu

My name is: Jaya and Jahlin

I live with: Our mum and dad

At home we speak languages:

English and we are learning Darumbal

When I eat, I use: We sit at the table with our family

We celebrate: By coming together with our big families

We sleep: In our own bedrooms

Something important to our family is: Our extended family are very important in our daily lives and central to our growth and development

Something I love about my culture is: Represents both sides of our family who are uniquely different but equally important

Something an ECEC service could do to embed my culture is: Acknowledge that we have a big number of family members who are very important to us and play key roles in our lives. By trying to learn who these people are and the role they play is an important way to understand us as an individual.



Did you know?

Prior to colonisation, more than 250 First Nations languages were spoken. Now, Darumbal is one of only 40 languages still spoken.

<https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/1500-endangered-languages-at-high-risk>

How one Family Day Care Service is going 'Beyond Behaviours'

Educators from We Belong Family Day Care (FDC) attended a sensory professional conversation facilitated by Inclusion Support QLD and were inspired by the range of low-cost resources that can be used to support children to self-regulate.



One educator commented, *“The changes in behaviour when children enjoy water play, and mixing textures has been wonderful, they are developing self-regulation skills and seem much calmer throughout the day.”*

After noticing changes in children’s behaviours, educators wanted to deepen their understanding of the role of sensory experiences in building healthy brains. They worked with their Inclusion Professional to develop an Innovative Solutions Project ‘Beyond Behaviours’ where they engaged Pathways to Resilience to provide tailored coaching and mentoring to the educators. Through participating in the project, educators developed skills to support children to co-regulate and they also increased their confidence in planning and providing sensory experiences to meet the needs of all children.

The children have also learned new skills such as breathing techniques to assist with self-regulation.

“I feel the benefit of the ball when I am showing the children how to use it, I see the children relaxing while they are using it and this follows through for the rest of the day”, FDC educator.



We Belong FDC continues to support the inclusion of all children and is now exploring how cultural experiences, sensory resources, and home language can support Korean children in their care.

If you’d like support to reflect further on cultural perspectives or self-regulation, contact your Inclusion Professional.



Difficult conversations made easier

Difficult conversations with families can be a common occurrence in Early Childhood Education and Care. Below are some tips to consider when holding sensitive conversations.

These tips have been compiled from discussions held at Healthy Kids series 4 in 2022 which focused on holding sensitive conversations with families:

- ▶ Be prepared, plan your conversation
- ▶ Consider if you might be misinterpreted and use a contrasting statement to state your intentions, e.g. 'What I don't want is What I do want is ...'
- ▶ Get the timing right for the conversation
- ▶ Start the conversation warmly
- ▶ Use intentional word choice and use a strengths-based communication style
- ▶ Always use a professional and respectful tone
- ▶ Tell your story
- ▶ Stay calm
- ▶ Breathe and take a break if needed
- ▶ Ask for other's stories and facts
- ▶ Be aware of family values, backgrounds, and culture
- ▶ Let them speak and listen to understand
- ▶ Provide reassurance
- ▶ Work together, don't push
- ▶ Show appreciation
- ▶ Focus on a shared understanding and mutual goal or agreement
- ▶ Create an agreed clear action plan with a timeline
- ▶ Follow up and check in
- ▶ Schedule further conversations

Your Inclusion Professional can support you to reflect on your partnerships with families



Visuals Supporting Children to 'Breathe, Think, Do'

Implementing visuals is just one of the strategies included in Goodstart Goodna's Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) to support children's wellbeing in the Kindergarten room.

The Kindergarten Teacher at Goodstart Goodna has been engaging in ongoing reflective discussions with her Inclusion Professional around the importance of implementing visual cues in the environment to support children's wellbeing. The service utilises a suite of visual cues to support children to communicate and self-regulate including bringing the Sesame Street's 'Breathe, Think, Do' app to life in physical form. These 'Breathe, Think, Do' visuals support children to navigate big feelings, resolve conflict and engage critical thinking skills.

An 'Inside Out' emotions board is used to support children to explore, identify, and communicate their emotions. Children now understand that not everyone feels the same way at the same time, and that emotions can change many times throughout the day.

The use of the visual problem solving wall supports children to collaborative find solutions to obstacles and challenges they might encounter in play. Educators also use the breathing visualisations help calm children's bodies when their emotions become too big for them. A visual room routine has been created with the children and is interactive and flexible to changes that have an impact on the routine such as the weather or children's choice to explore something different. Educators further support children's socio-emotional learning by embedding AUSLAN sign language into the daily rituals and communication with children.

The Kindergarten Teacher is working alongside the other educators at the service to transform their outside shed into a sensory room where children can go if they are seeking a quieter space to help regulate their emotions. The teacher has set a goal to mentor educators at the service to build their confidence to implement visual cues to support all children to become confident and capable learners in an inclusive environment.





How your Strategic Inclusion Plan can enhance and promote your Quality Improvement Plan

- 1** A Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) can support your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) by demonstrating how educators are meeting the needs of each child, their family, and the local community (Quality Areas 1 -7).
- 2** The SIP aligns with services QIP and is a strength-based plan focused on the implementation of inclusive practices and actions that can enhance each child's learning and development (Quality Areas 1 & 5).
- 3** The SIP can enhance educators' pedagogy by acknowledging their strengths and reflecting on their understandings of inclusion expanding on their professional capacity and capabilities. (Quality Areas 4 & 7).
- 4** Your Inclusion Professional can support you to build collaborative partnerships with families and communities, link you with relevant community groups, services, and organisations (Quality Area 6).
- 5** Linking your SIP to your QIP can provide evidence for the three Exceeding themes in the National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating process.

"Inclusion Support has been a fundamental part of our service when it comes to supporting the inclusion of children with additional needs. Our Inclusion Professional, Melissa Belling was able to compassionately guide our service to understand the importance of inclusion and allowed for our service to take a collaborative approach to each child's learning and development, in alignment to our service's Quality Improvement Plan. Melissa was able to support our service in developing a Strategic Inclusion Plan and ensured that this process was synergetic and tailored to our service."

- Claudia Little, Director Charleville Early Learning Centre

Your Inclusion Professional can support you to link your SIP and QIP, assist with critical reflection and provide practical advice on quality inclusive practices that relate to each Quality Area of the National Quality Framework.

Moving On Up- Major Transitions

Transitions are times when children move between different spaces or places. This often means new and different people, experiences, expectations, and routines. It is important to view transitions for children not as single events but as pathways to later successful outcomes particularly toward learning.

The Beginning

First Impressions count! Take some time to consider how families and children are welcomed to the service.

- ▶ What strategies are used to ensure enrolment and orientation are conducted well? Is there an opportunity for educators to get to know each family and for children and families to become familiar with the service and educational program? (This can be added to your SIP and QIP).
- ▶ How are resources and learning environments set up to ensure children's strengths, ideas, culture, interests, and abilities are considered?



The Middle

When moving through age groupings at the service, think about how children's agency can be supported, and how children can be best prepared for changes to promote positive wellbeing.

- ▶ In the lead up to the transition, how could educators share insights, perspectives and information about each child with each other?
- ▶ How could children and families be supported to engage in shared decision-making?
- ▶ What strategies could be used to build meaningful relationships with each child? Add these to your Strategic Inclusion Plan.
- ▶ How are each family's cultural identity, strengths and fears around transitions considered?

Beyond

All children have different interests, needs and motivations therefore each child's transition from Kindergarten to Prep will be unique. Understanding the key areas of development to support school transitions are crucial.

- ▶ How could your service build positive partnerships with local schools? This could be highlighted in the service profile in your SIP.
- ▶ What opportunities are there for children to engage in regular visits to the school and/or with new teachers? Are there options to participate in a transition to school program?
- ▶ Are children supported to engage in conversations about school and ask questions or voice their concerns?



Shaping your practice

Take some time to reflect by yourself or as a team on the transitions occurring in your service. Consider the major transitions occurring throughout the year at your service and list them below. Then plan actions you would like take moving forward. This reflection can support the development of your Strategic Inclusion Plan.

Major transitions:

What could I do differently next time?



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

