

## INCLUSION READINESS

Inclusion Readiness is a component of inclusive practices which refers to the consistent and considered thought given to environments, resources and planning to ensure you are ready and able to welcome children (and families) with a range of needs, abilities, interest and backgrounds.

Inclusion Readiness does not expect Educators to be expert, rather it requires you to be competent in:

- recognising when a child and their family need support
- knowing what resources to tap into
- drawing on knowledge of diverse approaches to inclusion.

The benefits of children experiencing a truly inclusive environment are profound as it will follow the children throughout their lives.

Your role in inclusion readiness is as facilitator of inclusive practices and is therefore very important.

What you do in practice should aim to assist the child to feel a sense of belonging, being themselves, and respected. With that comes your support of the children's diverse needs that may present at any time in your care.



The Educator who provides an environment rich in diverse learning opportunities that carefully understand the connections the child makes to their environment is the educator who are in-tune with what the play based curriculum offer.

Inclusion readiness is about the Educators and program being ready to include children of all background into the curriculum and daily environments.

### Background

Inclusive practices are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC](#) and Australia has agreed to uphold these rights of every child in our care.

Both the National Quality Standards (NQS - [ACECQA](#)) and the Learning [Frameworks](#) are influenced by UNCRC recognising the importance of all children's rights to:

- Have their voices heard
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Have free access to safe and appropriate play environments and resources
- Engage daily in social interactions with their peers and supportive adults
- Develop at a pace that is right for them.

As you reflect on your inclusive practices take time to study the National Quality Standards (NQS - [ACECQA](#)) and the Learning [Frameworks](#). Each of these documents is designed to guide and support you to provide high quality inclusive environments.

It is important to acknowledge that provision of high quality inclusive environments in Education and Care settings are an ongoing journey. The 'look' and 'feel' of each individual settings will appear different from service to service as social contexts, child, family, staff and community needs and dynamics varies.

It is not expected that every service will provide identical resources or environments as the uniqueness of every service will reflect their practice. Where Inclusive Practice is the same is in the way that we as professionals are expected to facilitate the child's right while in care. This closely links our behaviour as Educators. Early Childhood Australia's Code of [Ethics](#) gives the anchor points for thinking about our professional practice:

- Respect
- Democracy
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Justice
- Courage
- Inclusivity
- Social responsiveness
- Cultural responsiveness
- Education



**A challenge:** Consider for a moment - What does exclusion feel like?

Exclusion can take place in many forms and sometimes it is not as obvious as you may think. Consider the following by placing yourself in a child's position.

*How would it feel?*

- *To be present but not included?*
- *To be defined by only one of your characters?*
- *To have lots of ideas and not be able to express them?*
- *To always have someone to help you do what other children can do themselves?*
- *To have someone always assume that you can't do things?*

Clare Boschetti and Anne Stone House, 2006

By reflecting on how you as a person would feel in those circumstances you will recognise the importance of your role as an Educator and the potentials for success or failure of each child education and care experience effect on your behaviour and action.

Now consider - What does inclusion feel like?

- **I am heard** – do you connect and listen to the child?

- **I feel a sense of belonging** – are you fostering opportunities for the child to have ownership of their development and environment on the same level as other children?
- **I have freedom to access and equity the same as my peers** – do all the children in your care have free and safe access to engage in all the daily social interactions with peers and adults?
- **My life pace is recognized as part of me** – do you support an environment that accommodate a development of independence at a pace that is right for the individual?
- **I am valued as an individual** – Do you know the Right of Children and practice what you have read?



## INCLUSION READINESS STRATEGIES

1)

### **Develop an agreed Inclusion Readiness Approach**

Inclusion can have many different interpretations depending on the beliefs, values and knowledge of an individual or group. As every individual holds a unique world view of what is right and true, this is bound to have influence on inclusive Education and Care service provision and it is therefore very important that you as an Education and Care service have the conversations about Inclusion Readiness.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) give a very good starting point for your discussion. NQF refer to the pedagogical process as being is organic and ongoing promoting Educators planning by;

- *Adopting holistic practices*
- *Being responsive to children*
- *Planning and implementing learning through play*
- *Intentional teaching*
- *Creating learning environments*
- *Valuing cultural and social contexts and providing continuity of learning*
- *Transitions and assessments for learning.*

2)

### **Conduct an Inclusive Readiness Audit**

An Inclusion Readiness Audit is a term used when your service gathers a snapshot of where you are at in regards to Inclusion Readiness and Inclusion Practices.

The information that you gather should inform you of strengths and gaps and where you need to improve (this can feed into your QIP).

Consider the following:

- Are we including children and parents voices?
- Are we involving the community?
- What can we improve on immediately?
- What training, resources and support do we need?
- Is your Philosophy up to date and truly reflect inclusiveness?
- Are your Policies and Procedures inclusive?



3)

### **Update your philosophy, policies and processes**

Your service philosophy, policies and processes are a reflection of the shared values and beliefs of all stakeholders (Educators, committee, families and children) in your service and it should have an impact on your inclusive practices.

*The philosophy underpins the decisions, policies and daily practices of the approved provider, nominated supervisor, Educators, co-ordinators and staff members and assists in planning, implementing and evaluating quality experiences for children.*

NQS: Quality Area 7, standard 7.2, element 7.2.1.

4)

### **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and Inclusion Readiness**

Your QIP is an ideal tool to allow for reflective thinking about your inclusive practices to take form. Whether you want to celebrate a success, strength or identify a gap around inclusion and Inclusion Readiness, writing a QIP will help you to track your journey.

5)

**Engage in partnership with Parents**

Being responsive to children requires you to have an understanding of their needs and interests. This can take time and need close observations, conversations and engagement with each child. It also requires a respectful working partnership with parents (the child’s first teacher) as they greatly influence their child’s learning, self-awareness and approach to learning. Parents and families are a vital source of information to help you begin to understand the needs and interests of each child.

*Educators recognise that families are children’s first and most influential teachers. They create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with Educators about curriculum decisions in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful.*

‘Belong, Being and Becoming’ Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

6)

**Reflective practice**

As you critically reflect on your practice and how the rights and needs of each child are met and how you work with the families, it is important that you document your thoughts. Educators need opportunities to revisit their thinking in order to measure shift and change towards an improvement in relation to Inclusive Readiness.

*Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children’s learning. As professionals, early childhood Educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change.*

‘Belong, Being and Becoming’ Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

7)

**Adopt a holistic approach to Inclusion Readiness**

Holistic approaches to teaching and learning recognise the connectedness of mind, body and spirit (Blatchford & Sylva, 2004).

When Educators take a holistic approach they pay attention to children’s physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning (EYLF).

While Educators may plan or assess with a focus on a particular outcome or component of learning, they see children’s learning as integrated and interconnected. They recognise the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning. They see learning as a social activity and value collaborative learning and community participation (EYLF).

**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY?**

Using the AEDC can enhance your programming and practice. It enables educators to find the best pedagogical strategies for the children in their care. Explore the profile of your community –

Search the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) website [www.aedc.gov.au/data](http://www.aedc.gov.au/data). The AEDC census data provides a snapshot of children's development that can inform communities and support planning, policy and action.

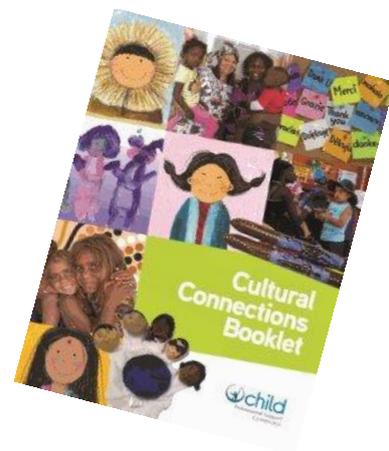
### **On a final note**

It may seem there is much to consider when providing high quality inclusive environments and some services may wonder where to begin. The key is to 'just begin' - look at possible changes you could make immediately and what you can build on that.

For each child to feel a sense of being and belonging, they must be able to have the opportunity to participate, engage, play and socialise within the environment that you provide. You, as Educators, therefore have a unique and privileged opportunity to positively influence the child's the learning journey.

**From Child Australia - [www.childdustralia.org.au](http://www.childdustralia.org.au)**

- Child Australia's Inclusion Statement
- Child Australia's Pedagogical Statement
- Child Australia Website resources and publications
- PSC Alliance on-line Library
- Professional Development – face to face
- Online Training



**Enjoy!**

### **References**

Boschetti, C. & Stonehouse, A. (2006). *A Piece of Cake - Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood settings*, Yooralla: AUS

Corbett, J. (2001). *Supporting Inclusive Education: A Connective Pedagogy*. Routledge: AUS

EYLF Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being and Becoming)  
<https://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>

NQS National Quality Standards <http://acecqa.gov.au>

Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Sylva, K. (2004). *Researching pedagogy in English pre-schools*.  
British Educational Research Journal, 30(5), 712-730

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) <http://www.unicef.org>