

Be You Disability Inclusion Guide



An introduction to inclusive practices for children and young people with developmental delay or disability



With delivery partners



Funded by





Acknowledgement of Country

Be You Acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land, sea, Country, and waterways across Australia. We honour and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

About Be You

Be You is the national mental health in education initiative delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace. Our vision is for a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health. For more information, visit www.beyou.edu.au.

See [the back page of this guide](#) for the benefits of registering to become a Be You Learning Community, and for a list of useful Be You resources.

Copyright © 2021 Australian Government

Thanks

Be You warmly thanks the Be You Learning Communities, Action Teams and educators who have contributed to this guide with feedback, survey responses and time spent reviewing material. We also acknowledge the collaboration and expertise of the working group members who supported the development of this resource on behalf of Beyond Blue and delivery partners Early Childhood Australia and headspace.

For their contributions to this guide, we also acknowledge AllPlay founder Professor Nicole Rinehart, Director of the Deakin Child Study Centre (School of Psychology, Deakin University), and Dr Ana Mantilla, Director of AllPlay Programs.

This guide has drawn on the expertise and many of the resources of [AllPlay](#), an initiative that creates new pathways for inclusion for children with disability. AllPlay's newest program, [AllPlay Learn](#), was developed in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training in 2019.



Contents

Welcome to this guide	4
1 What is inclusion?	7
2 Leading an inclusive learning community	11
3 The role of educators in inclusion	20
4 Universal Design for Learning	28
5 Supporting transitions	38
6 Inclusion myth buster	43
7 Quick guide to inclusive language	45



Welcome to this guide

Find out what this guide is about, how to use it, and our approach to inclusive language.

Inclusion promotes belonging, protects the rights of children and young people with developmental delay or disability and fosters the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people of all abilities.

In early learning services and schools, inclusion involves the whole learning community. This means leadership teams, educators, families, children and young people, other professionals and community members working collaboratively.

Each learning community's journey of inclusion for children and young people with developmental delay or disability might look quite different to another's. There's no one-size-fits-all recipe or checklist for creating an inclusive learning community.

Inclusive practices and strategies are constantly evolving, and this guide is intended to be the place to start or continue your journey, whether you're part of a leadership team or an educator who's interested in promoting inclusion.

How to use this guide

Use the information in this guide to continue learning, have team discussions, plan actions or reflect on practice in your learning community.

The guide is organised into sections that cover key inclusion topics. Each section is designed to be a quick reference to inclusive practices, and includes:

Useful strategies

From what is inclusion to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), each section is full of useful information and strategies you can consider and adapt to suit your community.

Stories

Real-life stories from educators in early learning services and schools show inclusion in action and share experiences of supporting children and young people with developmental delay or disability.

Reflections

You and your team can use the questions accompanying each story to explore learning and think about inclusive practices in your setting.

Helpful resources

There are links to helpful resources throughout the guide if you'd like to learn more at your own pace.

Educator insights

We share educators' observations about inclusive strategies in early learning services and schools, including what they have learned.

Tip sheets

The guide also includes tip sheets that bust myths about inclusion and discuss language to promote inclusion. Download, print or distribute these to share knowledge.

Language

While we've used the person-first approach in the stories in this guide, the best approach is to always ask each child or young person or their family what they'd prefer. To find out more about the 'person-first' and 'identity-first' approaches to describing developmental delay or disability, see [Model the use of inclusive language](#); for a tip sheet on using inclusive language, see the [Quick guide to inclusive language](#).



Ashwin's story

In this story, Ashwin's mother and his classroom teacher discuss some inclusion strategies to support Ashwin, who has a diagnosis of autism.

Ashwin is a 13-year-old boy who loves football and watching his favourite team play on weekends. Ashwin, who has a diagnosis of autism, can become overwhelmed in the classroom setting when the noise levels rise. Ashwin's classroom teacher, Mr Mansouri, met with Ashwin and his mother Anna to discuss some strategies to help with the sensory overwhelm, which impacts on Ashwin's learning and engagement. This discussion with Ashwin's family included ideas to provide support when Ashwin begins to detect that noise levels are becoming uncomfortable for him. Anna suggested using Ashwin's interest in football as a potential strategy, given that he also collects football cards. Mr Mansouri and Ashwin agreed that when Ashwin was beginning to feel overwhelmed, he would put a football card on his desk as a visual indicator that he needs a sensory break. So that Ashwin doesn't feel singled out, Mr Mansouri and Ashwin discussed that Ashwin could pick a card related to a player from Mr Mansouri's favourite team – to make it a shared joke with Mr Mansouri and the whole class. Upon seeing the card, Mr Mansouri would ask Ashwin to get some 'jobs' done for him, which would allow Ashwin to remove himself from the space for a brief break.



For reflection

- What are some considerations Mr Mansouri may have had before meeting with Ashwin's family? What questions and observations of Ashwin's behaviour would you share with his mother and how would you frame this?
- Using a student's strengths and interests can be a wonderful engagement tool. How has Mr Mansouri attempted to do this with Ashwin?
- Do you perceive any barriers that may impact on Mr Mansouri's plan to engage with Ashwin? If so, how could these be overcome?

1

What is inclusion?



What is inclusion?

Inclusion is when the strengths of every child and young person in a learning community are recognised, encouraged and fostered.

In the context of early childhood, the guiding principle that underpins equity, inclusion and diversity in the [National Quality Framework \(NQF\)](#) 'recognises all children's capacity and right to succeed regardless of diverse circumstances, cultural background and abilities'.

"Inclusive education means that all students are welcomed by their school in age-appropriate settings and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school," says the Department of Education in a [national resource](#) that supports the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

"Inclusion is a basic human right, an ethical obligation and a legislative requirement," according to Early Childhood Australia, referring to the rights of children with developmental delay or disability as set out in the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.

Another way to look at inclusion is to see it as an acknowledgement that every child and young person is unique. In an inclusive learning community, this diversity is respected and seen as an opportunity to learn, to grow and to implement changes that benefit the whole community.

"Inclusion is about how to ensure that each child or young person in our care develops a sense of belonging to the group and has equitable access to opportunities and resources, while diversity includes the differing cultural and social backgrounds of children and young people and their unique strengths, abilities, preferences and needs," Early Childhood Australia clarifies.

"Inclusion is good for everyone," says Professor Nicole Rinehart, founder of the AllPlay Learn program, which helps to create inclusive education environments for children and young people with developmental delay or disability.

"Research shows that having children and young people of all abilities together in the same learning community helps with acceptance and recognition, with the result that it helps develop a stronger sense of belonging for everyone. Ultimately, our society and quality of life improve if we're fully inclusive," Professor Rinehart says.

“

Connecting children and young people together in groups of mixed abilities and interests is always worth the effort. Let them learn from each other and create opportunities for each to share their area of strength.”

– Educator insight

Jonas's story

This story is about how an educator has made small but important adaptations to meet Jonas's learning needs. Jonas has hemiplegia, a type of cerebral palsy.

Four-year-old Jonas loves to climb, has an impressive vocabulary and is a natural leader. Jonas has a type of cerebral palsy called hemiplegia, where mobility on one side of his body is affected. For Jonas this is his right side and, therefore, movement in his right arm and leg is more difficult. He has a slight limp and prefers to use his left hand.

Jonas's educators have made some adaptations to their practices to support his wellbeing and meaningful participation. This includes providing different-sized water jugs, including a lighter one for Jonas to pour water for himself and his peers. They also have flexible expectations of all children, including Jonas, during sleep-time preparation, acknowledging it takes Jonas longer to remove his shoes before rest. They have created space for movement and have reduced the number of table-top activities to prevent over-cluttering. Working with Jonas's occupational therapist, they're also incorporating stretching activities into their daily yoga sessions to support Jonas's physical needs, ensuring he is participating alongside his peers.



For reflection

- Describe Jonas's strengths and how you would enhance these. Can you think of any opportunities where Jonas's strengths could be used to support other children's learning?
- One of the principles of the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) (EYLF) is 'high expectations of children'. How have Jonas's educators demonstrated this?
- The educators are incorporating some of the exercises prescribed by Jonas's occupational therapist into a pre-existing yoga routine in which all children participate. What do you think about this approach? What would you think if Jonas's educators did the exercises separately (one-on-one) with him instead?



Learn more

Read Early Childhood Australia's [Statement on the inclusion of every child in early childhood education and care](#).

See this [Spotlight on inclusive education](#) by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

Check out AllPlay Learn's Teacher Guides for [early learning services](#), [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools for a more in-depth explanation of what inclusive education is.

Visit the [Raising Children Network](#) website for an overview of education rights for children with developmental delay or disability.

Read the [Disability Standards for Education 2020 Review](#) to find out whether the Standards are still effective in achieving their objectives.

References

Department of Education Skills and Employment (DESE) (2015), [Planning for Personalised Learning and Support: A National Resource](#) (online document).

NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency, [Understanding inclusion](#).

Raising Children Network (Australia), [Education rights for children with disability](#) (online document).

2

Leading an
inclusive
learning
community



Leading an inclusive learning community

Leaders and leadership teams play an important role in developing and strengthening inclusive learning communities.

“Strong leadership is key for inclusion. If strong leadership isn’t present at all levels of a learning community, there will be gaps – or in other words, pockets of exclusion – in schools and early learning services,” says Professor Nicole Rinehart, founder of the AllPlay Learn program, which helps to create inclusive education environments for children and young people with developmental delay and disabilities.

Early Childhood Australia suggests leaders set the tone and, ultimately, the culture of a learning community.

“A team will naturally look to their leaders for guidance, direction and support. Leaders are not expected to be experts in inclusive practices, but they need to be committed to inclusion,” says Early Childhood Australia.

The following are some examples of inclusion strategies, suggestions and considerations to inform practice.

Share your vision

Take the time to share your vision for inclusion as a leader, and help your team understand that everyone in the learning community thrives when a community is inclusive.

Regularly review the philosophy and policies at your service or school and consider how they reflect inclusive values and beliefs, and a commitment to inclusion.

You may also want to consider an inclusion policy for your early learning service or school to reinforce the value of inclusive practices to both educators and children or young people, as well as their families. Among other things, this policy could outline expectations about inclusion in your learning community, as well as how you’ll ensure your team understands these expectations.

“

Our school uses the first two weeks of the year to build relationships between students and the teacher, and set expectations. Students participate in learning opportunities to get to know their peers and develop a sense of belonging in the classroom through games and team-building activities.”

– Educator insight

Adopt a framework

Inclusive practices in early learning services or schools happen by intentional planning and design, and evolve to meet the changing needs of children and young people in a learning community.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an overarching framework that can help leaders and educators in learning communities design environments that are flexible and where barriers are minimised. You can learn more about UDL and how to adopt (and adapt) its principles to your learning community in the section on [Universal Design for Learning](#).

Facilitate professional development

Your team can learn or deepen their understanding of inclusion practices and principles with support.

“Every educator wants to be inclusive, but not every educator inherently knows how to be inclusive,” says Professor Rinehart. “It’s also true that different disabilities and developmental delays require different strengths-based inclusion strategies. Inclusion is never ‘one thing’. That’s where professional development comes in.”

There is a broad range of professional learning and development opportunities for educators related to inclusion, including the following:

- The Inclusion Agencies responsible for administering the Australian Government’s [Inclusion Support Program](#) across Australia’s different states and territories often facilitate or recommend relevant professional learning opportunities and events for educators working in some early childhood services such as long day care, school age care and family day care. Inclusion Agencies also have a network of Inclusion Professionals who can provide practical and tailored advice and support to early childhood services. [Contact the Inclusion Agency](#) for your state or territory for more information or visit your agency’s website.
- Some state-based education departments provide access to inclusion mentors and consultants who work with leadership teams in preschools, kindergartens, and primary and

“

People with disability need to be seen and heard. Having trainers or presenters who have a disability would make an impact on educators learning about inclusion.”

– Educator insight

secondary schools to improve outcomes for all children and young people. Other education departments are rolling out or expanding their own state-based ‘disability inclusion’ packages, some of which include provision for building skills and knowledge in inclusive education for educators in government preschools, kindergartens and schools. Contact the education department in your state or territory to enquire about opportunities.

- The [Association for Children with a Disability](#) provides an extensive list on its website of [professional development and training opportunities and resources](#) offered by a variety of organisations.
- [Emerging Minds](#), a government-funded initiative that leads the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health, offers online learning to [understand child mental health and disability](#).
- The [Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership](#) (AITSL) provides resources online to inform teaching, including a guide to [teaching students with disability](#).

- The [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability \(NCCD\)](#) provides dozens of [professional learning resources](#) on its website, about everything from classroom adjustments for specific disabilities and developmental delays to understanding more about disability standards and obligations for teachers and leadership teams.
- [inclusionED](#) supports diverse learners and outlines a range of evidence-based practices on its website.
- The [Australian Council for Educational Leaders](#) presents an annual Disability and Inclusion Conference and facilitates [inclusive classrooms](#) online courses.
- [Children and Young People with Disability Australia \(CYDA\)](#) is the not-for-profit national peak body that represents children and young people with developmental delay or disability. It offers resources such as the [Youth LivedX](#) series, where young people with disability talk about the issues that matter to them, and a [webinar series about inclusion in early childhood](#).

Access available resources and funding

The Inclusion Support Program has an Inclusion Development Fund that provides funding to facilitate inclusion in early learning communities. This includes subsidies for an additional educator, time-limited support, Family Day Care top-up and innovative solutions to overcome barriers to inclusion.

The first step for accessing any funding through the Inclusion Development Fund is developing a [Strategic Inclusion Plan](#). This is a plan which outlines a service's short-term and longer-term strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practices,, and is something that your Inclusion Agency's Inclusion Professional can help you develop.

In addition to the funding provided by the Australian Government to support students with disability in schools, some state-based

education departments offer relevant funding and grants programs, such as the Victorian Government's [Inclusive Schools Fund](#), which supports small innovative building projects that make a big difference to meeting the needs of children and young people with disabilities in schools. Contact the education department in your state or territory to enquire about similar programs and funding opportunities.

If a child or young person in your learning community requires additional support to meet their developmental needs, you may be able to refer the child and family to their local [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\)](#) partner for short-term or longer-term supports, or consider helping families get in touch with an [NDIS Local Area Coordinator](#).



Maddy's story

This story shares how an educator, parent and speech pathologist work in partnership to support Maddy's communication.

Three-year-old Maddy has recently enrolled at kindergarten. She is very expressive with non-verbal communication and enjoys outdoor play, doll play and tactile activities. Maddy has moderate hearing loss in her right ear and severe hearing loss in her left ear. She uses hearing aids in both ears and has been learning some sign language to support her communication. Maddy's speech and communication is delayed, but she has responded well to early intervention through oral language training and can verbalise basic wants and needs, such as 'drink' and 'hungry'.

Maddy's mum has concerns about her ability to communicate and be understood by others as people often forget she has a hearing impairment. Maddy's mum would like the early learning service to continue to build on Maddy's communication skills so that she can enjoy relationships and develop friendships. Maddy's mum has supplied a communication book which features visual aids that Maddy uses to communicate with others, and pictures of the signs she's using and learning at home.

Maddy's educators invited Maddy's speech pathologist to visit the service, to support them in teaching some of these same signs to Maddy's peers. Having incorporated signs into story and mat time, they've noticed a few of the children beginning to sign when they're communicating with Maddy and each other. While Maddy's mum has spent some time at the service to support communication between home and Maddy's educators, she is returning to work soon and will be limited in her ability to visit the service face-to-face.



For reflection

- Describe Maddy's strengths. How would you enhance these?
- How could you continue to foster a strong partnership with Maddy's family, particularly given Maddy's mum will soon have less capacity for face-to-face visits?
- In what ways have Maddy's educators collaborated with Maddy's mum to address her concerns and hopes for Maddy? And what more would you do?

Promote the use of evidence-informed strategies

The strategies you choose to facilitate inclusion in your learning community will depend on the age group and the unique strengths of each child or young person. Lay strong foundations by using strategies that are based on research, and which consider the child or young person's goals, aspirations and strengths.

Model the use of inclusive language

As a leader, how you speak about and refer to a child's developmental delay or disability is incredibly important.

While words used well can be empowering and enabling, certain terms and phrases can limit expectations and reinforce unhelpful perspectives. Avoid using negative terms like 'suffers from', 'victim of' or 'afflicted by' when you're referring to or describing a child with developmental delay or disability.

There are two main approaches to the language used to talk about a child or young person's developmental delay or disability: the person-first approach and the identity-first approach.

According to [AllPlay Learn's Language Guide](#), the person-first approach focuses on the child rather than their disability. For example, 'a child on the autism spectrum' rather than 'an autistic child'. The identity-first approach is the reverse, so 'I am a Deaf person'. This approach can allow children and young people to embrace their disability or developmental delay with pride.

Ask each child and talk to their family about what they'd prefer, so you and your team can use the right language for them. You can learn more about inclusive language and how to use it in the [Quick guide to inclusive language](#).

“

Find what other schools or services in your local area are doing and adapt to suit your context. Working within a network also helps.”

– Educator insight

Foster a whole learning community approach

To focus on a whole learning community approach to inclusion, it's important to:

- support meaningful participation by the child or young person, their family, educators and staff, and the wider community
- encourage and support educators to share knowledge, learnings and experiences of inclusion
- promote the importance of working with relevant health professionals outside of your learning community, particularly where a child or young person, or their family, already has a relationship with them.

According to the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency: "Inclusion happens when educators are supported in their practice by strong leadership; work together as a team to think about how inclusive their practices are; and work collaboratively with families and support them to understand inclusion".

Build partnerships with families

Professor Rinehart notes that "when a family and their learning community are on the same page, it promotes a feeling of continuity and support, free of any conflict or confusion for the child or young person".

A partnership with the family of a child or young person with developmental delay or disability taps into the expertise and

perspectives of different individuals to solve problems, and to address new challenges or changes in an ongoing way.

As a leader, make it a priority for educators and staff in your learning community to understand the hopes, goals and expectations that families have for a child or young person with developmental delay or disability, and work closely with them to achieve these goals and outcomes.

Some suggestions for this are:

Valuing the family's knowledge. A child or young person's family is well placed to identify their strengths and abilities. The family is also able to share strategies and approaches they use in the home environment, in previous learning communities or with their health professionals.

Understanding a family's perspective.

Just as important as developing a strong understanding of what a family hopes for their child or young person in the learning community is listening to their concerns or anxieties. This may include concerns about their child being treated differently or their reflections on being the parent of a child with developmental delay or disability. Being respectful of a family's understanding and beliefs about developmental delay or disability is helpful, too.

Understanding that every family is unique.

Families will have different needs and preferences for how you work together, and how they would like to communicate or collaborate. Be respectful of the family's background, beliefs, values, customs and language, and encourage open, constructive discussions so you can provide culturally appropriate support.



Jimmy's story

This story demonstrates a strengths-based approach to supporting Jimmy, a child with Down syndrome.

Jimmy is a 10-year-old boy who has Down syndrome. Jimmy attends his School Age Care service four afternoons a week. He demonstrates many strengths, including empathy towards his peers, a willingness to help, emerging music skills and a playful disposition. He also has a great sense of humour. Jimmy experiences some challenges expressing his needs verbally and sometimes has difficulty understanding what's being asked of him.

Jimmy's primary school has a core shared value: All children, irrespective of disability or developmental delay, are wonderful and each child has strengths. It's the educator's core responsibility to identify these strengths, celebrate them and share them in the learning environment. This has framed the way educators see and build relationships with all children, including Jimmy.

Recently, Jimmy has displayed behaviours such as head banging, dismantling other children's creations and raising his voice. Rather than attribute this to his disability, the educators have adopted a strengths-based approach, considering Jimmy's behaviour a form of communication and exploring what message he's trying to communicate. Jimmy's educators support him by naming his emotions (for example, saying "I can see you're frustrated, Jimmy") to help make sense of his experience. They've identified that Jimmy enjoys tactile stimulation and have provided a range of sensory items that Jimmy can explore with his hands. The School Age Care staff validates this approach, while the room teachers share information and notes to support continuity of care between the school and School Age Care service.



For reflection

- Using one of Jimmy's strengths as an example, consider how you'd celebrate and share this with your learning community.
- Consider how celebrating the strengths of children (as well as families and educators) is a protective factor for mental health and wellbeing.
- What do you think of Jimmy's school's belief that all children have strengths, irrespective of disability and developmental delay?
- Jimmy's educators are committed to working with Jimmy. What are some examples of this in the story? What do you think are the benefits?

Learn more

See AllPlay Learn's [Inclusive Educator Strategies](#) webpage.

Read AllPlay Learn's guides to communication between parents and educators for [early learning services](#), [primary schools](#) and [secondary schools](#).

Check out the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's [Building Partnerships with Families](#) resource.

For school age care settings, check out the [My Time Our Place V2.0](#) framework.

You can also review this [inclusive education framework](#) for schools.

References

AllPlay Learn, [Educator Guide](#) (online document).

AllPlay Learn, [Language Guide](#) (online document).

Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education, [Inclusive Education – what does the research say](#) (online document).

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, [Inclusion Support Program](#) (online document).

NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency, [Inclusion development fund](#) (online document).

NSW Government, [Inclusive learning support](#).

Queensland Government, [Inclusive education](#) (online document).

Victorian School Building Authority; [Inclusive Schools Fund](#) (online document).

Victoria State Government, Education and Training, [Disability inclusion: increased support for students with disabilities](#) (online document).

NZ Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education, Guide to parents, whanau and communities, [Provide options to support flexible communication and collaboration](#) (online document).

NZ Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education, Guide to leading inclusive schools, [Access support, programmes and resources](#).

NZ Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education, Guide to parents, whanau and communities, [Understand the beliefs, values and expectations of parents and whanau](#) (online document).

NZ Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education, Guide to parents, whanau and communities, [Value the family's knowledge of effective ways to support their child's learning and well-being](#) (online document).



3

The role of educators in inclusion



“

Be a strong advocate for the rights of all children. Aim for equity not equality.”

– Educator insight

The role of educators in inclusion

Every educator contributes to inclusion in the learning community.

While the leadership teams of early learning services and schools have a vital part in creating and achieving inclusion in a learning community, every educator plays a significant role.

“Because children and young people spend such a significant amount of their time in early learning services and schools, educators are really well placed to support and promote inclusion by modelling and facilitating the idea that everyone is valued, supported and connected to each other,” says the Be You Clinical Lead at headspace Schools.

According to Early Childhood Australia: “Regardless of what is happening in your learning community, whether leadership is emerging or there are structural barriers, you can – and do – make a difference as an educator. You have the agency to get to know families, build relationships to facilitate collaboration, be committed to identifying

the strengths of every child and implement strategies and change.”

“Educators have great insights, as well as training and knowledge of a child or young person’s development. As such, they can be great advocates for children and young people with developmental delay or disability,” says headspace Schools.

This can be incredibly helpful for a family, particularly for those who are just embarking on a diagnosis of developmental delay or disability, according to headspace Schools.

“This may even involve a sense of loss or grief in the early days,” notes Early Childhood Australia. “Families find themselves very quickly having to navigate how to advocate for their child using a system that may be quite unknown to them. It can be incredibly challenging, which is why educators can be supportive by sharing their observations and insights.”

Lara's story

In this story, an educator established a trusting relationship with Lara's family to identify both strengths and developmental concerns related to Lara's expressive language.

Lara has just turned five. She's curious, plays well on her own and joins others' play mostly by observing what they're doing from a safe distance. She enjoys watching other children using paints and clay but prefers not to participate, and becomes distressed by certain textures. She does seek out her educators for book-sharing, and lights up when she sees her key educator, Tina. Lara's expression, coupled with her body language, communicates her needs and preferences effectively. Her expressive language is limited to "no", "more" and a high-pitched vocalisation when she's frustrated. Her receptive language is more developed, and she can follow simple requests. Lara's educators have documented both her strengths and their developmental concerns for her over a six-month period, and have discussed these with her family. The family's response was that they believe she's "developing normally" and that she'll "pick these skills up in time".

Recently, Tina has adopted a new approach, sharing Lara's strengths and daily learnings during every encounter with Lara's family to build trust. This has paved the way for Tina to suggest to Lara's family that they start using a journal to facilitate their daily communication with her, as Lara's key educator. The journal would include a space for Lara's family to share what she's doing at home, and reflect on her development and learning. One of the aims of this journal is to identify Lara's strengths and areas where she may need support at home. This has allowed Lara's family to feel like they're partners with Tina – and that their knowledge is valued. This has also led to Lara being booked for an assessment with a paediatrician and some shared planning to support Lara's expressive language.



For reflection

- How did Tina's approach affirm the role of Lara's family as the most important people in Lara's life and avoid positioning herself as the expert on Lara's expressive language?
- How do you think this strategy supported and facilitated shared goal setting and planning for Lara?
- Tina always made sure to highlight Lara's strengths throughout the day, while also sharing her concerns sensitively. What might be the response from families if, instead of doing this, you focus solely on your concerns for a child or young person in your care?



Developing skills in inclusion

The following suggestions are a useful place to start in increasing your skills and knowledge of inclusive practices.

Understand what you're working towards

Know that you're not expected to have all the answers when it comes to inclusive practices. Aim to create a learning environment where children and young people of all abilities feel respected, safe, included and can participate in meaningful ways.

"You don't need to be an expert," says Early Childhood Australia. "When it comes to inclusion every community and every child is different, so even educators who are experienced in this space are always learning. Acknowledge that you're feeling uncertain and that this may be new for you because that will give you the permission, space and opportunity to learn more, whether that's via a family partnership, a colleague, a speech pathologist or from professional development resources."

Consider your image of the child

Your image of a child or young person with a developmental delay or disability affects how you, as their educator, talk, listen and relate to the child. According to the [Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education](#), this can influence how a child or young person's peers, the families of their peers and other educators will relate to them, too.

Instead of using language to describe a child or young person by their restrictions, describe what they do instead. For example, rather than "Georgia is wheelchair bound" think "Georgia uses a wheelchair for mobility". And acknowledge that everyone has unique strengths, interests and abilities, regardless of the presence – or absence – of a disability or developmental delay.

“

Model inclusion! Reflect on your own responses, tone of voice and the language you use.”

– Educator insight

Identify these and create opportunities for a child or young person to use them to experience success in their development and learning. See also the [Quick guide to inclusive language](#) for more on language to use and to avoid.

“

Develop your knowledge of the attitudes, beliefs and stigma about disability.”

– Educator insight

Have high expectations

It's important to have high expectations for everyone in your learning community. While a child or young person with a developmental delay might learn or achieve in a way that is not the dominant way, or it may take longer or require different resources to support participation, have the same expectations of them. Support their participation by tailoring tasks to their strengths and abilities. Sending the message to a child or young person and their peers that you, as their educator, believe they can do it is one of the strongest messages around inclusion that you can adopt.

Learn what you can do

The strategies you choose to use as an educator will vary widely depending on a range of factors including your knowledge of the child's disability or developmental delay, your relationship with the child, family and extended support group (including health professionals), the child's strengths and abilities, and the education setting where you work.

For example, while using visual aids in addition to spoken instructions may support some children and young people in your learning community, providing more time

and opportunity to practise a task may be more useful for others. There's no one-size-fits-all approach.

Having a framework or some fundamental principles to guide you in identifying and removing barriers to inclusion in your learning community's environment can also make a big difference. The framework called Universal Design for Learning can be useful; read more about [Universal Design for Learning](#) later in this guide.

Collaborate

Early Childhood Australia says it's important to remember that inclusion isn't an individual pursuit: "Reach out to colleagues and your leadership team and, of course, a child's family to help understand how you can best support them and so that you, as an educator, are also supported."

Include the child or young person in this collaboration. "Inclusion is about doing with the child," Early Childhood Australia points out.

"Drawing on the support from your peers and collaborating with them to find and introduce strategies, while at the same time continuing to build your relationship with the family can be particularly helpful" says the Be You Clinical Lead at headspace Schools.

headspace Schools also stresses the importance of working closely with any health professionals who may also be playing a role in a child or young person's life.

"As well as developing a good understanding of what different health professionals do, it's also important to know why a professional has recommended a certain approach or strategy," headspace Schools explains.

"So as well as finding out the 'how' of something ask 'why', too. As an educator, understanding the context and impact of a particular strategy will help you implement it more effectively."

“

*Ask for help, try new things,
and look for resources.”*

– Educator insight



Bridget's story

This story shares how an educator, parents and school counsellor work in partnership to support Bridget, who has a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Bridget is a 10-year-old in Year 5 with a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In class, Bridget absorbs new information very quickly and so loses interest in repetitive tasks. When this occurs, she begins to fidget, talk, sing and move around, which distracts her classmates. Managing time and resources, organising her thoughts into words and getting along with peers are also difficulties she encounters at school.

Mrs Flinders, Bridget's class teacher, contacted Bridget's parents to work together on strategies to support her in the classroom. Mrs Flinders has noticed that when Bridget is reprimanded for her disorganisation, there's no benefit – and her parents have identified the same. They've decided to focus on providing specific praise and recognition for all signs of Bridget's organisation. To support this, Bridget's parents and Mrs Flinders worked together to set up a weekly planner, including a checklist for packing Bridget's school bag before school and at the end of the day, as well as prompts to pack up five minutes prior to other students. Mrs Flinders also liaised with the school counsellor about how else to support Bridget in class. The counsellor recommended a sensory profile assessment to help outline Bridget's sensory preferences and how she processes sensory information in her environment.

After this was done, the counsellor worked with Bridget, her parents and Mrs Flinders to make sensory accommodations in the classroom to support Bridget. These accommodations included a tactile movement cushion from home for Bridget to sit on, and allowing Bridget to incorporate movement regularly into her routines, for example by handing out worksheets or participating in movement breaks with the whole class. To support Bridget's schoolwork, Mrs Flinders provides step-by-step instructions for how to complete the work to help keep Bridget on track. This improves her engagement, reduces disruption to peers and improves Bridget's peer relationships and self-esteem.



For reflection

- What examples in this story highlight classroom challenges for Bridget, and for Mrs Flinders?
- What collaborative work practices can you identify? What were the perceived benefits for Bridget and her engagement in the classroom?
- Considering what we know about Bridget, can you think of how the strategies suggested could be applied in other areas of her school life (for example, in the playground, interacting with peers, or during whole-school events)?



Learn more

Read AllPlay Learn's Educator Guide for [early childhood services](#), and Teacher Guides for [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools. Another useful resource is the [ABC approach to behaviour](#), an observational tool that teachers can use to find out what a child or young person is trying to communicate with their behaviours.

See also AllPlay Learn's Educator Guides to Family-Educator Communication for [early childhood services](#), [primary](#) schools and [secondary](#) schools.

Check out the Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education's [Inclusion Toolkit for Educators](#).

See also this information sheet about [supporting children to regulate their own behaviour](#) by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Join the [School Inclusion Network for Educators](#) (SINE), an initiative of All Means All, the Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education, for education professionals seeking to collaborate on inclusive practices.

References

AllPlay Learn, [Basics](#) (online document).

Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education, [Inclusion Toolkit for Educators](#) (online document).

Early Childhood Australia, [Inclusion is for every child, every time](#) (online document).

University of Southern Queensland, Open Access Textbooks, [Opening eyes to inclusion and diversity in early childhood education](#) (online document).

4

Universal Design for Learning



“

If a child is in a wheelchair, offer chairs to other children so that everyone is at the same height.”

– Educator insight

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning outlines a set of principles that gives all children and young people equal opportunities to learn.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework based on the idea that we all learn in different ways and therefore need different ways to access information and to demonstrate what we know.

The 'typical' or 'average' child doesn't exist. Children and young people have different interests and motivations for wanting to learn or discover things, and the way they do this best is diverse too. For some, reading is the best way to get information, while for others, hearing or seeing information is more effective. As well, the way a child or young person feels most comfortable – and competent – at demonstrating what they've learned will vary.

The principles of UDL encourage educators to support learning in different ways, provide choice and options to assess learning, and consider how to sustain children and young people's motivation and engagement.

“By providing a range of resources and flexibility, children and young people are empowered to engage in learning. Empowering learning environments support all children to feel a sense of belonging and to thrive in learning and in relationships. This is a protective factor for mental health,” says Early Childhood Australia.



A framework for all learners

It's important to understand that while the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework may be particularly helpful for a child or young person with developmental delay or disability, it's a framework designed with every learner in mind – it's helpful for all children and young people.

To understand this concept, consider the accessibility features you regularly encounter on a day-to-day basis: automatic doors, closed captions during a TV program, or a ramp that provides alternative access into a building. The ramp is incredibly useful for someone who uses a wheelchair for mobility, but it also ensures easier access for a person who's pushing a pram or delivering an item on a trolley.

In a learning community, the UDL framework may help to inform curriculum adaptations or environmental design elements that allow children and young people who have developmental delay or disability to

“

Visual aids and modelling are vital to ensure students with English as a second or additional language can feel included, too”

– Educator insight

participate and learn equally, but every child or young person in the learning community can benefit, too.

While the framework is more likely to be recognisable in school environments, where the emphasis is on learning and achieving academic goals, the principles of UDL are applicable in early learning services. In this section, under the heading titled Universal Design for Learning: An Early childhood perspective, you'll find examples of how UDL might apply in an early learning context.



The Universal Design for Learning principles

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is based on three main principles or objectives.

1. Providing multiple means of engagement

Children and young people at school are engaged and motivated to learn in different ways. Likewise in early learning services – children are supported to engage in relationships and learning experiences in different ways. For example, some children and young people in school find it much easier to engage and stay motivated when they're working on a project as part of a group, while the opposite is true for others. Similarly, children in early learning services may prefer to participate in different ways, whether that's individually or through small or larger group collaboration.

Noise, movement and spontaneous changes to routine can also affect engagement. For some children and young people, it's helpful and highly engaging. For others, it's disruptive, disengaging and even upsetting. No single strategy for engagement will work for every child or young person in your learning community, so this principle offers educators the flexibility to provide multiple options, allowing children and young people choice and autonomy in how they engage.

For reflection

- How well do I understand what motivates or supports a child or young person in my learning community to participate? And what could I do to improve my understanding and knowledge?
- Do children and young people have choice and autonomy in how they participate in their learning environment?
- What adjustments or modifications can I make to activities that ensure children can participate according to their strengths, abilities or interests?



2. Providing multiple means of representation

In other words, offering or delivering teaching and learning experiences in more than one format. While some children and young people find it easier to grasp information if it's delivered via a textbook, for others, information is much easier to comprehend if it's presented visually, or orally, or in a hands-on format. Many children will also benefit from using a combination of formats when it comes to understanding new concepts. No single type of representation will work best for every child or young person in your learning community, so UDL supports providing multiple options.

For reflection

- Can the text and materials (charts, posters) that children and young people use be customised to suit them better? For example, can they adjust fonts sizes and background colours?
- Are there tactile, hands-on strategies I could use, too? For example, when introducing a new concept to children, such as number sense, have I combined printed charts and posters with concrete, tactile items to consolidate the child or young person's understanding?
- What visual or auditory delivery methods could I introduce? And how would access to digital tools and platforms help?

“

Some strategies in my class are a set seat for consistency, the timetable for the day on display to allow for predictability, and allowing students to sit on a wobble cushion or use a fidget toy.”

– Educator insight

3. Providing multiple means of action and expression

This principle is about how children and young people share or demonstrate their learning. For example, while pen-and-paper tests suit some learners at school, verbal presentations, podcasts or visual representations will better suit others. In early childhood, while some children may be able to express their feelings verbally by saying “I’m angry” or “I’m sad”, other children will express this through movement, dance or art. It’s important to consider what opportunities and means are available to children for self-expression.

Children and young people also have different needs when it comes to mobility and using sensory tools effectively. Some learners vary significantly in terms of how much practice and organisation they require. Just like the first two principles, there’s not one type of action and expression that will work best for every child or young person in your learning community, so providing a variety of options is crucial.

For reflection

- Have we organised and designed the physical learning space so that children and young people can access what they need without having to ask?
- Are we providing more than one way for children and young people in our learning community to show who they are, what they know and what they need.
- Are we giving children and young people enough flexibility in time and opportunities?



Archie's story

In this story, teachers provide opportunities for multiple means of expression to help facilitate self-directed learning for Archie, who was born with cerebral palsy.

Fourteen-year-old Archie is a sweet-natured, sensitive teenager who has a good sense of humour and a keen interest in sports. He was born with cerebral palsy, which affects his motor control on the right side of his body, and he also has an intellectual disability, low vision and a speech impairment. Recently, he transitioned to secondary school where he enjoys spending time with his classmates. He's made a couple of good friends since starting at his new school, and makes a conscious effort to seek out and sit next to them in class. His teachers have noticed that he learns best when he's with his friends. He tends to listen closely to what they say and often repeats it, so it's something his teachers encourage.

Archie's teachers have also observed that he responds best to tactile, hands-on learning opportunities. When these are paired with spoken information and instructions, he learns new concepts well. He's also able to verbalise his choices and preferences effectively when he's comfortable in his surroundings. When Archie's teachers give him options for activities, he'll enthusiastically respond verbally to the options he prefers, and stay silent as a response to the other options.



For reflection

- What are Archie's strengths as a learner?
- How are Archie's teachers currently applying Universal Design for Learning principles to facilitate his inclusion and participation in the learning community?
- Thinking about your own learning community, how could you apply the principles in your own curriculum?

Universal Design for Learning: An early childhood perspective

You might have noticed that you're already using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in your work as an early childhood educator, guided by the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) (EYLF) and its principles, such as 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations' and 'Respect for diversity'.

For example, if your service welcomes children across a wide age range, it may be that children of all ages and stages in your community have more opportunities to interact and participate in activities together than they might in a school setting. That means you're probably already providing multiple means of engagement, representation and action and expression.

Early learning services inherently require participation, and the following examples may help you better understand how UDL applies in an early learning service.

Block play

Providing access and opportunities for children to play with blocks is important in early learning due to the way it supports fine motor development and dexterity, problem solving, imagination, creativity and emerging communication and literacy skills.

Given the different ages and abilities of children, it's important to provide blocks in a variety of sizes, textures and materials, including foam blocks and hollow blocks. For example, younger children may delight in simply touching the blocks or exploring sounds the blocks make when they touch. Older children may be curious about the different shapes and angles of the blocks.

Use a variety of strategies to support block play, too. For example, you could set up different spaces to support individual, small group and large group collaboration.

Giving children choice and autonomy over how they use the blocks is key.

To stretch a child's imagination and thinking skills, you could provide sketchbooks for those children who are motivated to take part in block play by conceptualising and planning what they'd like to build first. Other resources you might use include rulers for exploring length and comparing size, baskets for sorting blocks based on their shapes or attributes, miniature figures to extend the complexity of block play or books on architecture and design.

This highlights the 'provide multiple means of engagement' principle in Universal Design for Learning, while also using the Early Years Learning Framework's principle 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations' and the 'assessment for learning' practice for these outcomes:

- children are confident and involved learners
- children have a strong sense of wellbeing.



The literacy space

In your environment's literacy space, you'll probably already have a wide variety of books to suit children's different ages, interests, stages and abilities.

Some additional ideas to consider would be having big floor books available to facilitate peer reading and learning; books that are essentially free of text so that they portray a story visually; and some books where the visual representations and pictures are very clear and obvious, and others that are more artistic and abstract. It's also vital to provide books that represent diverse cultures, traditions and languages.

You could also provide audio books as an alternative method to supporting children's language, literacy and communication skills. Hearing stories, singing songs and even saying rhymes are useful here, too. You could encourage the development of fine and gross motor skills through writing using varied mediums, providing children with opportunities to draw, scribble and write.

This highlights the UDL principles of 'provide multiple means of engagement' and 'provide multiple means of representation'.

A multi-faceted literacy space acknowledges that children grasp information and concepts in different ways. This connects to the principles 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations' and 'Respect for diversity' in the Early Years Learning Framework.

It also supports the practices of being responsive to children and cultural competence, related to these outcomes:

- children have a strong sense of identity
- children are connected with and contribute to their world
- children are effective communicators.



The sign-in process

Many services encourage children to record their attendance themselves to foster a sense of belonging (aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework outcome 'children are connected with and contribute to their world').

Provide options to allow for children's varied ability and interest in recording their attendance or signing in. Options might include children writing their names down; identifying their name badge, choosing it and placing it on the sign-in board. Or supply photos of the children and each child signs in by finding or identifying their own photo.

By providing these different sign-in options, you're using the UDL principle 'providing multiple means of action and expression' to allow children to demonstrate that they understand and have learned what's expected of them. You're also embedding the Early Years Learning Framework's principles 'Partnerships', 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations' and 'Respect for diversity' by allowing children to use the sign-in method that suits their abilities and preferences.

Milly's story

This story sees educators and a support team providing multiple means of engagement for Milly, who has delayed expressive language skills, to support her participation at kindergarten.

Milly is four years old and has recently transitioned from a long-day-care centre to a kindergarten. She's a content, confident girl who spends most of her time at kindergarten exploring the outdoor area, enjoys hands-on activities like finger painting and block play and loves animals – particularly farm animals. She doesn't interact or acknowledge the other children at kindergarten very much and, while she can talk and has good receptive language, she has delayed expressive language skills. Milly requires considerable support to participate in the routine activities of the day, particularly during group activities and mealtimes. As a result, the kindergarten has received additional funding to increase the educator-child ratios to ensure all children, including Milly, have their needs met and to help ensure inclusion for everyone in the learning community.

The kindergarten works closely with Milly's support team, including her speech pathologist, to create, share and implement strategies that support her inclusion. These include the use of visual strategies, such as schedules and choice boards. Milly is beginning to interact well with these by selecting her play preferences and reflecting through non-verbal communication that she's feeling more at ease and confident in the room, and with upcoming transitions. Milly's special interest in farm animals and tactile objects is also being used during the routines and learning experiences that she finds challenging, such as group time. Her educators have found that when Milly has these objects to touch or simply close by, she's able to concentrate and engage. This option is available for all children, along with other adjustments like sitting on bean bags.



For reflection

- What are Milly's strengths?
- Thinking about the steps Milly's educators have already taken to support her inclusion, which Universal Design for Learning and Early Years Learning Framework principles, practices and learning outcomes do you think they're using?
- How might you use Milly's strengths and special interests to support her communicating more effectively and being understood by her peers and others?



Learn more

Read more about [Universal Design for Learning](#) and check out helpful examples of why it works in practice, provided by UNSW.

In the early learning space, refamiliarise yourself with the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) and reflect on inclusion in your setting.

References

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, [Supporting agency: involving children in decision-making](#) (online document).

Australian Government Department of Education and Training, [Early Years Learning Framework](#) (online document).

Block Play, [Pedagogical statement](#) (online document).

NZ Ministry of Education, [A guide to Universal Design for Learning](#) (online document).

Raising Children Network (Australia), [Handwriting skills for children](#) (online document).

Raising Children Network (Australia), [Reading and storytelling with babies and children](#) (online document).

Teach Early Years, [The benefits of block play](#) (online document).

Understood, [What is Universal Design for Learning](#) (online document).

UNSW Sydney, [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) (online document).

5

Supporting transitions



Supporting transitions

Transitions are times when children or young people experience change, and are required to adapt to new circumstances, people, expectations, environments or relationships.

The transition may be from home to a learning community, from one learning community to another or, on a different scale, from one learning experience to another or from outdoor to indoor play.

Transitions require children and young people to learn new skills, including navigating change. This can be particularly challenging for a child or young person with developmental delay or disability.

The strategies you choose to use to support a child or young person who's experiencing a transition will depend on their needs and strengths. There are three common strategies to bear in mind when children and young people transition to a new learning community.

1. Get to know the child or young person

Share useful and relevant information about the child or young person with the learning community they're transitioning to. Make the time to understand a child or young person's strengths and interests, as well as their needs and, where appropriate, their experiences in their previous learning setting. Sharing what you know about a child or young person or seeking information from their previous settings will be helpful for the child and their family. This knowledge will

help you structure orientation activities that support them during the transition phase, reduce anxiety and create a positive learning environment from day one.

“

“Listen to the families and their priorities for their child. Start from a place of trust and learn together.”

– Educator insight

2. Partner with families

Families are an integral part of successful transitions. Connect with and talk to families on how to support a child or young person during transitions, but also take time to identify and address concerns a family might have.

“Transitions can be as equally challenging for families as they can be for children,” says Early Childhood Australia. “For example, for families transitioning from early learning services to primary school, adjusting to larger class numbers and the prospect of having less frequent one-on-one contact with their child's primary educator can be cause for concern.”

Anticipate and pre-empt challenges like these by making time to meet with the family to hear their concerns. This helps create a trusting relationship where you can support each other during the transition for the child or young person.



3. Plan for successful transitions

Effective transitions in an early learning service or school require a whole learning community approach, where children and young people, families, leadership teams and individual educators – as well as healthcare professionals – work together, always keeping the interests of the child or young person front and centre.

At the heart of this approach is establishing good communication channels between everyone involved, keeping in contact and sharing relevant information.

Taking steps to familiarise a child or young person and their family with a new learning environment can also play a role. For example, visiting a new classroom without other children present can help a

child with developmental delay or disability become familiar with the space, learn where resources are and feel a greater sense of safety when they start in the new setting.

Transition meetings or introduction opportunities can be helpful, particularly if you consider and plan what you could do in addition to what you usually do for all children or young people transitioning to your service or school.

Isabella's story

This story demonstrates how educators used their local Inclusion Professional to support Isabella's transition to their early learning service.

Three-year-old Isabella enjoys painting and loves unicorns. She has been diagnosed with a childhood anxiety disorder called selective mutism and finds it difficult to use verbal communication at times, particularly with unfamiliar people or when an environment becomes loud and busy. Recently she enrolled in an early learning service, where educators arranged transition meetings with Isabella and her family. During these meetings, Isabella was shy and did not speak to educators and peers when engaging in the new environment. This prompted Isabella's educators to contact their local Inclusion Agency to discuss strategies to support Isabella's transition.

Some of the strategies her educators have used include orientation play sessions with her and her family at the service; sending Isabella 'get to know me' pages from each of her educators; and creating social stories for Isabella's family to share with her at home about the service and its routines. Then, to ensure Isabella was included in the service's daily routine once she started attending, educators adapted and evolved their routines to flow in smaller groups and they also became more flexible with timings. Two months into her journey with the service, Isabella seems settled and comfortable, and participates well with several peers in small groups. She also speaks with great enthusiasm about her days at the early learning service with her parents at home.



For reflection

- What are some questions you'd ask Isabella's family during the transition meetings?
- Drawing on Isabella's strengths and interests, what else would you do to help her transition into your learning community?
- How would you further adapt a learning environment to help Isabella feel confident and comfortable?



Learn more

Explore AllPlay Learn's [Transition resources](#) for educators, which cover transitioning from home to early learning services, transitioning to primary school and transitioning to secondary school.

Read a [Guide to Transitions](#), published by New Zealand's Ministry of Education as part of its Inclusive Education initiative.

General transition resources include:

- Victoria State Government's [Transition: A Positive Start to School](#).
- Be You Fact Sheets: [Transitions in learning communities](#).
- Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority's [Transition to school](#) professional learning video.

References

AllPlay Learn, [Transitions](#) (online document).

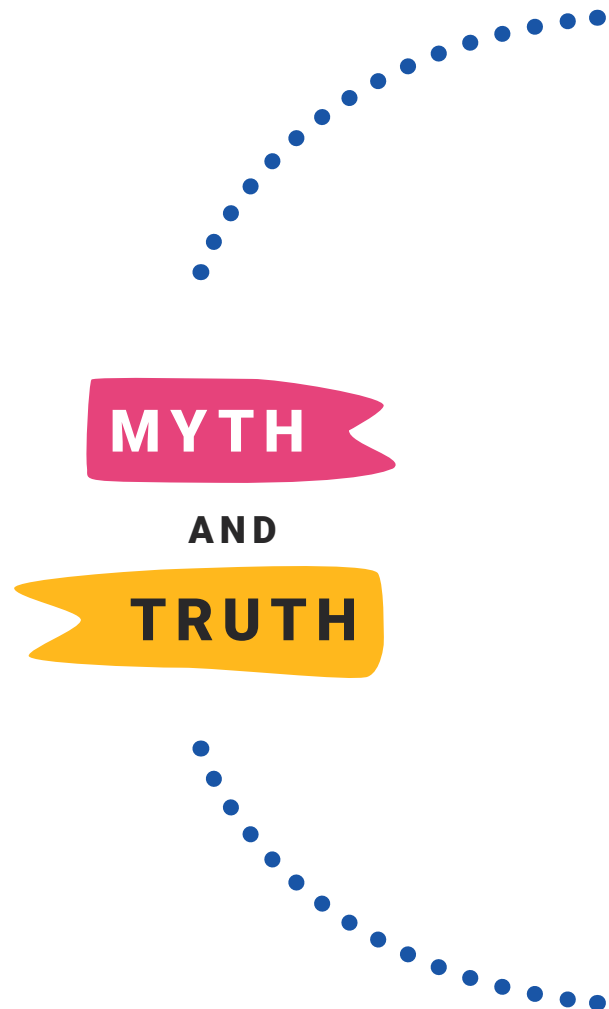
Be You, [Transitions in learning communities](#) (online document).

NZ's Ministry of Education, [Guide to Transitions – managing times of change](#) (online document).

6

Inclusion myth buster

Conversation starters to spark discussion, ideas and learning about inclusion in your community.



References

Parent to Parent, [Inclusive education - A right not a favour](#) (online document).

TASH, [Dispelling the myths of inclusive education](#) (online document).

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, [We hear you, Breaking down inclusion barriers and myths](#).

University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Impact, Winter 2018/19, Volume 31, number 2, [Myth vs fact: what is true about including students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?](#) (online document).

Inclusion myth buster

MYTH

Inclusion is only about children and young people with developmental delay or disability.

The rest will miss out if a child with additional needs is included.

Inclusion is about everyone getting the same thing in the same way.

Securing adequate funding is the best way to improve inclusion.

Inclusion is a problem.

In mainstream early learning services and schools, children and young people with a significant disability or developmental delay won't get the support they need.

Once you've ticked all the boxes on an 'inclusion checklist', you're done!

Inclusion is the charitable, morally right thing to do.

TRUTH

Inclusion is about access, engagement and success for every child and young person.

All children benefit from opportunities to learn from, and with, each other.

Inclusion is about creating an environment that allows every child or young person to participate meaningfully.

Funding can certainly facilitate and support inclusion, but it's not the only factor.

Inclusion is an opportunity.

When mainstream early learning services and schools plan for inclusion using widely accepted principles, such as Universal Design for Learning, every child gets the support they need.

There's no-one-size fits all when it comes to inclusion. You don't 'do inclusion' according to a checklist. It's always evolving and changing.

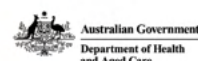
Inclusion is a basic human right.



With delivery partners



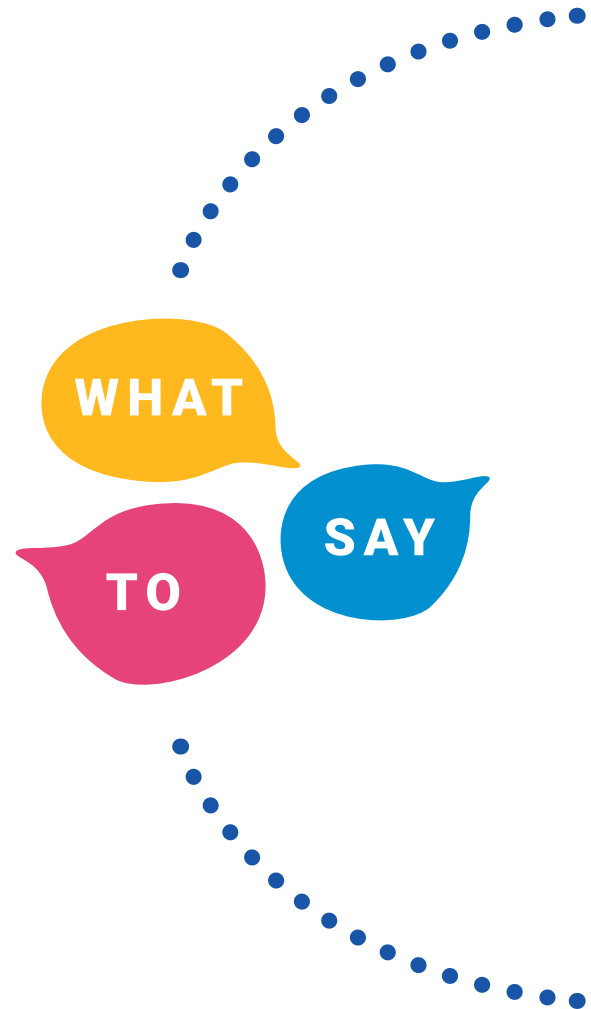
Funded by



7

Quick guide to inclusive language

It's important to use
inclusive language because
language is influential.






References

AllPlay Learn, [Language Guide](#) (online document).

People With Disability Australia. (2019). 'What do I say?
[A guide to language about disability](#)'.

Quick guide to inclusive language

When you're referring to a person ...	 Avoid saying ...	 Consider saying ...	 Because ...
with any type of developmental delay or disability	afflicted by, crippled by, suffers from, victim of	child or young person with a disability or developmental delay	negative language to describe disability can be disempowering and inaccurate. Not all people view their disability as a negative experience.
with any type of developmental delay or disability	special needs, differently abled, specially abled	child or young person with developmental delay or disability	euphemisms might feel kind but can create additional stigma.
with a physical disability	wheelchair bound, can't walk	child or young person who uses a wheelchair for mobility	this frames diverse function as a strength, highlights the empowering role of assistive technologies or supports, and encourages others to consider a child or young person's abilities.
with a learning disability	slow, slow learner	child or young person with developmental delay or a learning disability	slow is negative, derogatory and inaccurate.
who does not have developmental delay or disability	normal, abled, able-bodied	child or young person without disability	this avoids implying that students with disability are not normal. It shows that disability is an aspect of human diversity.

The best approach to inclusive language is to always ask the child, young person or family their preferred language.



With delivery partners



Funded by



Be You resources for educators

Delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace, **Be You** empowers educators and every learning community to be their most mentally healthy, positive and inclusive.

Now you've read the Be You Disability Inclusion Guide, browse the Be You website for educator resources related to supporting children and young people with developmental delay or disability.

Fact Sheets

Gain knowledge and to share information with your learning community.

- [Overview of mental health services](#)
- [Help-seeking in early childhood](#)
- [Help-seeking for children and young people in schools](#)
- [Recommending additional support](#)

Webinars

Learn from the Be You team and other educators across Australia through sessions, events and webinars.

- [Supporting Children with Complex Needs](#)
- [Professional Boundaries and Difficult Conversations](#)

Educator wellbeing

Wellbeing Tools for You is a collection of online apps and resources that Be You has compiled for educators. This resource offers guidance and practical strategies to look after your wellbeing, and to put yourself in a better position to support others in your care.

Join Be You today

Join **Be You** today and be part of building lasting positive mental health and wellbeing for children and young people in Australia.

The best way to sign up is as a **Be You Learning Community**, giving you access to the full range of resources and support from a Be You Consultant.

Be You resources include free online interactive sessions and events, accredited Professional Learning, Fact Sheets, a Programs Directory, planning and implementation tools, and more.

[Get in touch](#) to find out how Be You can support your early learning service or school.

Find out more at:
beyou.edu.au

Follow us



With delivery partners



Funded by

