

# {Embrace}

Summer 2022 | Your inclusion support magazine



**Ways to include  
diverse families**

**+**

**How the VIA can  
support family  
day care services**

VICTORIAN  
INCLUSION  
AGENCY

One For All

# { Acknowledgement of Country }



The Victorian Inclusion Agency acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work. We recognise their continuing connection to culture, land, water and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the strength of family connection and kinship within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their ongoing dedication to educating and caring for children. Sovereignty of these lands was never ceded.

## { Contents }

### 03 Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in your landscape

Discover three key insights for success in transforming your garden to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives



### 04 It all started with a phone call: How the VIA can support family day care services

Learn how a family day care scheme worked with their Inclusion Professional to empower educators and strengthen inclusive practice



### 08 **FEATURE** Ways to include diverse families

How do we truly embrace and reflect diverse family types in our learning environments? Read this article to find out!



### 12 Equality and equity – what are they and how can we practice them in children’s services?

Explore examples of equality and equity in practice and use these handy reflective questions in your next team meeting

### 16 Top 10 diverse holiday stories for children

Expand your service’s book collection with Lara’s top 10 holiday stories from around the world!

### 18 How to make the most of your Strategic Inclusion Plan

Can children’s services plan for inclusion? Yes! Learn how to develop a meaningful, engaging Strategic Inclusion Plan



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**As we near the end of another trying year for the education and care sector, I would like to recognise the ongoing commitment of educators, who continue to deliver exceptional outcomes for children and their families despite the many challenges faced daily.**



In an era where childhood anxiety is at a peak and staff shortages make it all the more difficult to keep up with the demands of your role, we hope that you are finding the time to restore your energy. Be it journaling, listening to music, gardening or meditating – we understand the importance of allowing yourself to experience the things you love, particularly as we enjoy some warmer weather.

We hope that you're feeling a sense of renewed hope and eagerness to see the new federal government deliver on its commitment and promises to our sector. We know that if we continue to strive for equity in education and care, great things will come.

When it comes to inclusion, we all have a part to play and I'm pleased to say that the learning never stops. We're excited to forge forward on our mission to ensure that every Victorian child thrives, both now and into the future. You are and will always be an important piece of the puzzle and this valuable work couldn't be undertaken without your commitment and support.

**Jane McCahon**  
**Victorian Inclusion Agency Program Manager**  
**Community Child Care Association**

The Inclusion Support Program (ISP) is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. As part of the ISP, the Victorian Inclusion Agency is led by Community Child Care Association, and is delivered in partnership with Yooralla and KU Children's Services.



# Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in your landscape

**Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) in consultation with Charles Solomon**

Many education and care services are looking to create spaces that honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. In outdoor areas, this can mean incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, design and visual storytelling, and of course, Indigenous plants. Here, VAEAI shares three key insights for success in transforming the landscape of your children's service.

Australia has some of the most unique plant life in the world and Indigenous plant knowledge stretches back tens of thousands of years. Landscape design provides us with the ability to communicate our ideas in the

physical environment while interacting with nature. From the texture of a path to the different colours of wood and steel, options for the 'hardscape' are endless. The selection of trees, shrubs and grasses can also bring an area to life.

As early and middle childhood educators, you may be wondering where to start. Maybe you're asking yourself, how can I assist children to learn and engage with Aboriginal culture in the landscape? Who do I approach? How do I find local plants and stories? These questions might seem a bit daunting, but there are excellent resources already available to help you.

- 1 Involve local Aboriginal people and Traditional Owners from the get-go**

Co-designing with local Aboriginal people and Traditional Owners, through community-controlled organisations such as VAEAI, is key. Involve them from the start. This allows their stories and ideas to shape the project and to embed their culture into the landscape.

Monero/Ngarigo Gooreng Gooreng man and landscape designer, Charles Solomon, says consulting with your local Aboriginal community from the very beginning prevents a "bolt-on approach, where spaces are designed and built and 70 per cent of the way through a project, we realise that we probably should involve Aboriginal people. Avoid this at all costs."
- 2 Balance your ambition with realistic outcomes**

Your budget may not allow you to do everything, but pacing, planning and staging your ideas will give you more success. To gain some inspiration, make sure you visit the Children's Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens. It's a great balance between sensory experience and learning for children.

The Australian Indigenous Design Charter ([bit.ly/3dd5erS](http://bit.ly/3dd5erS)) is a great starting place in auditing your space to identify current gaps and opportunities.
- 3 Recruit experts to help in the construction**

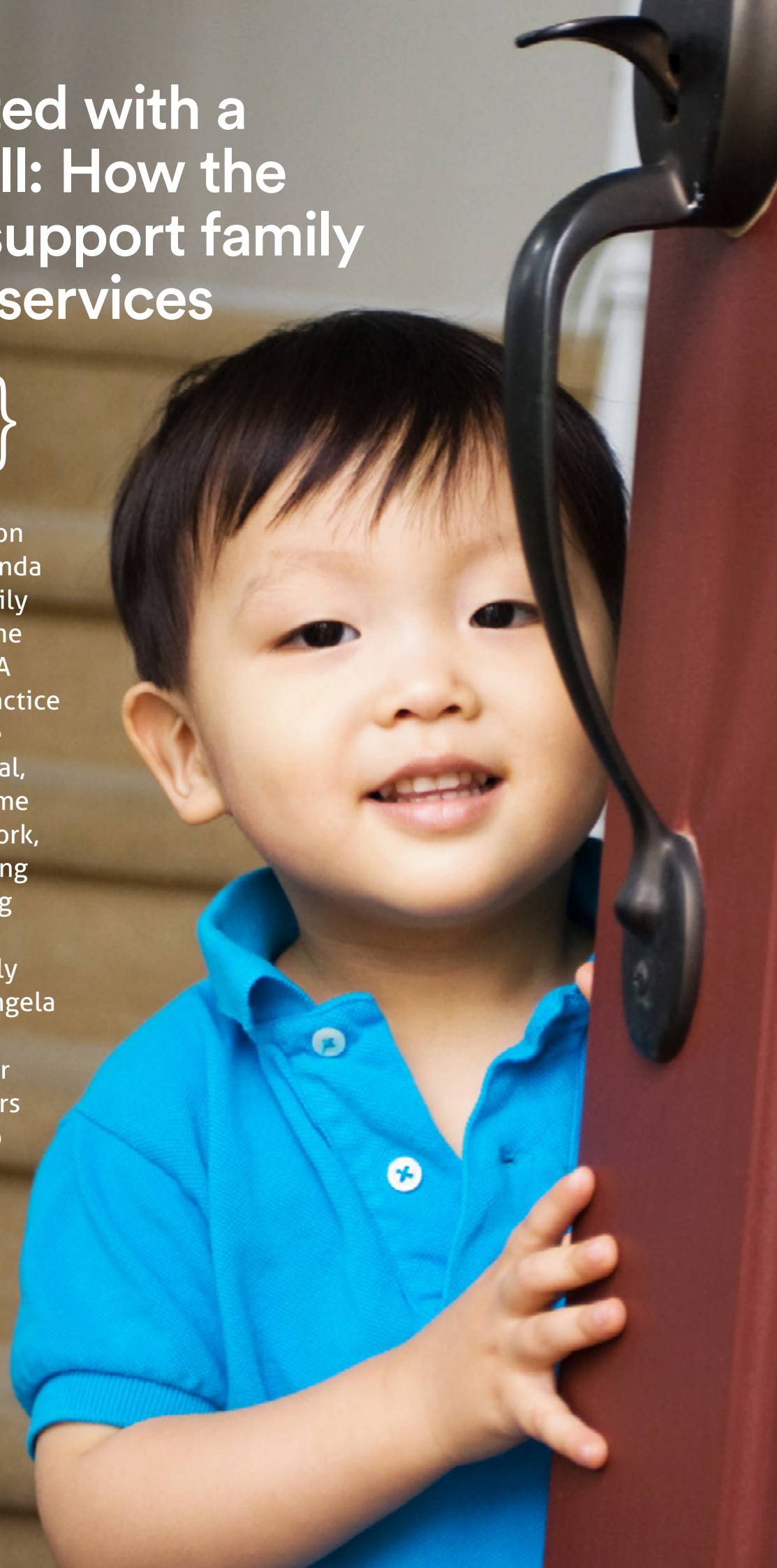
Lastly, building a garden, like any construction project, can be stressful. Make sure you access experts where you can – there are people out there who can help you!



# It all started with a phone call: How the VIA can support family day care services

**BRENDA WARD**  
Inclusion Professional,  
KU Children's Services

As their local Inclusion Professional (IP), Brenda reached out to a family day care (FDC) scheme about attending a VIA Trauma-Informed Practice Network. This simple phone call was pivotal, connecting the scheme to not only the network, but ongoing mentoring and capacity-building opportunities. Here, Brenda and VIP Family Day Care Director, Angela Buttigieg, share how they worked together to empower educators across the scheme to strengthen their inclusive practice.



**Brenda:** *Can you tell us a bit about VIP Family Day Care?*

**Angela:** We're a FDC scheme with a large team of educators, sitting across the Western Metro area of Melbourne in Wyndham City Council. Ninety per cent of the children and families attending our services are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Over the past year, the VIA has been assisting us to support our educators, children and families and their diverse inclusion needs. It all started when Brenda welcomed our leadership team to join a networking session on trauma-informed practice.

**After attending the network, how has the VIA continued to support you?**

Taking part in the VIA Trauma-Informed Practice Network laid the foundation for how we then chose to connect our educators to work alongside our IP. Brenda and the VIA team provided support and guidance through regular mentoring and capacity-building sessions with us. They've worked hard to understand and get to know our educators and contexts.

In our meetings, we have thought-provoking conversations that encourage our team to implement strategies in ways that suit our style and needs.

In between meetings, the VIA communicates with us via phone calls and emails, providing follow-up information and resources.

Throughout our relationship, Brenda has continually empowered us to identify and act on the many barriers to inclusion within our service and local community. Together as a FDC scheme, we identified trauma and trauma-informed practice as one of our key inclusion focuses.

**Building on our Strategic Inclusion Plan, Brenda helped us form a clear understanding of our barriers and ensured we set short and long-term inclusion goals.**

We're currently working towards implementing an Innovative Solutions project to help us access additional resources.

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**What have been the main barriers for your educators when supporting the inclusion of children? How did the VIA support you to unpack them?**

Each child learns, communicates and responds differently – for children to be able to thrive, these differences need to be nurtured. The main barriers educators face in FDC when supporting inclusion is finding sufficient planning, observation and reflection time. Without enough time, it's difficult to identify and implement specific goals surrounding the needs of each child.

As many FDC educators work alone from their homes, they can feel isolated and disconnected from each other. This has been especially prevalent during COVID times. Our mentoring sessions with Brenda have been so helpful in reconnecting our educators. Face-to-face visits from IPs have also helped reassure our educators that they have a support network behind them.

**Can you tell us a little bit more about the mentoring and capacity-building sessions?**

We've seen an overwhelmingly positive response from educators to the support provided by the VIA. One of the biggest highlights for me has been witnessing educators realise they aren't the only one facing barriers – and that they don't need to feel ashamed of having a hard day.

In the mentoring sessions, we wanted to create an inclusive and supportive environment for educators, so they could feel comfortable sharing their experiences and connecting with one another. We made purposeful decisions around the networks, going so far as the seating arrangements, to maximise engagement and safety.

These considerations helped our educators to actively listen and critically reflect on their practice and their past and present experiences. Over the course of the sessions, educators began identifying that many of the challenging behaviours they were trying to navigate were attributed to trauma. We're all gaining a much deeper understanding of what the children and families accessing our services may be going through.

**Our educators have voiced how great it is to talk to other adults in similar situations to them, how amazing it is to hear that others face the same barriers and challenges, and that there is support available.**

Our entire scheme agrees networking and mentoring have been the most effective way to engage and distribute information to educators, so we will be continuing with this approach. Connecting our educators has become one of our biggest priorities.

**How has accessing inclusion support enriched your services and programs?**

We often reflect on our journey over the last year and how much we have developed as a service. On any given day, we face at least one of our barriers. But each day as we examine our practice, we find ourselves reiterating that we're working towards the right goals. We want to do all we can to continue to support and empower our educators.

We've seen many changes in our educators' practices and outlook on inclusion. For example, some educators have been implementing quiet areas for children to retreat to when they're feeling distressed, or offering 'time-in' time rather than 'time-out'. We've seen educators reflect on their entire environments and make changes to better support children's complex and changing needs. We've seen a positive shift in educators' ability to identify how a small change to a child's morning routine may impact the child's entire day.

We have also noticed an increase in meaningful conversations around how we can continue to provide opportunities for all children and families to access our services. Connecting children and families with multiple educators has been a game-changer – this means there is a familiar educator available for the child if their regular educator gets sick or takes leave.

**Allowing children and families access to education and care in a safe environment is our biggest passion. We feel we're on the right track to engaging and supporting as many people in our community as possible.**





# Ways to include diverse families

**SAMANTHA WILLIAMS  
and LARA SPEIRS,  
Inclusion Professionals,  
Community Child Care Association**

In 2022 and entering 2023, there is no longer a 'default' family type. Children may have two parents at home, one parent, queer parents, parents who speak English as a second language, may not live with their parents at all, or have a family structure or home life you've never seen before. Diversity is a concept we hear a lot about, but how do we truly embrace and reflect diverse family types in our learning environments? Here, Sam and Lara share some simple but powerful ways to ensure inclusivity for all children and their families in education and care settings.

Inclusive practice can look like seeking to ensure that what matters to each child and their family is represented in our programming (e.g., the culturally diverse celebrations we engage in). It can also be seen in the resources we provide, which are hopefully as colourful and unique as the diverse range of children in our classrooms.

We've come up with a few ideas you can use to support the inclusion of all family types at your children's service. As well as a selection of practical activities to get you started.

## Get ready to include the wonderful diversity of your families in your learning environments!

### 1 Evaluate whether your events are inclusive of all family types

**Reflection:** Consider the sorts of families who attend your service. Are there children with multiple sets of parents? Children who are in foster or kinship care? Children in multicultural families? Children whose parents are in the LGBTQIA+ community? Children in single-parent families?

If you answered yes to any of the above, consider how the event you're planning might be welcoming or excluding these diverse family types. What can you do to enhance their visibility and representation at your event?

**Action:** A good first step might be to offer families a private forum, such as a suggestion box, to voice any ideas or concerns around upcoming celebrations, or any matter that affects their belonging in the community.

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**2 Regularly communicate with families to better understand their needs**

**Reflection:** No one knows what your families need better than they do. Consider having open and honest conversations with families and asking them what you can do to build a safe, inclusive environment for their family type.

Actively seeking feedback when programming and planning events will help to build a sense of belonging for every community member. For example, this may be as simple as reframing 'Father's Day' to 'special persons' day'. Although your activity or event may fall around Father's Day, renaming it allows all children and families to participate, regardless of their family structure.

**Action:** Surveying families about what type of celebrations and events are important to them could easily form part of your enrolment process. You could even be more specific by asking what cultural events or meaningful awareness days they recognise. Ramadan? Diwali? Pride?

This information can then be used to create a calendar, listing all the dates important to your community and how your service might recognise these special days.

**3 Communicate using inclusive language and processes**

**Reflection:** It's important to remember that every family is unique, and communication should be tailored as such. Consider identifying and mitigating any communication barriers families might experience, such as access to the internet or guardians' ability to read and comprehend the information provided by your service.

You might also consider the way communication is sent out for children living across multiple households, to ensure all parties have equal access to information about their child or upcoming community events. Make sure to consider if any of your families might require translation, cultural or otherwise.

**Action:** Try addressing communication to 'families', 'guardians' or 'adults', rather than 'parents' or 'mums and dads'. This is a very easy way to include the broad family types that may attend your service.

**4 Ensure paperwork reflects the modern families we see in our services**

**Reflection:** Consider if your current administration forms, such as enrolments, are meeting the needs of all your families. Forms should be open-ended and easily personalised to reflect each individual family structure.

By choosing forms that follow a default family narrative of two parents, male and female, you may be missing out on other information that is critical for your service to know. Forms should steer clear of default gendered language (e.g., 'mum' and 'dad' sections for guardians) and be inclusive of all genders.

**Action:** Include an open-ended section in your forms for families to opt to share their preferred pronouns and the pronouns of their children. Respect preferred pronouns and take them into account in future communications with the family and child.

**5 Provide representative resources**

**Reflection:** What children, families and educators see – on shelves, on walls or even in the toy area – says a lot about what stories are valued at your service. It's important that the resources in your room reflect the diversity of experiences, family types and cultures that make up your community.

When you look around your learning environment and at your resources, what stories are being told? Who are the 'heroes' and who are the 'villains' of the stories? Are the stories representative of the wider community? What do the families represented look like? Do your resources query or reinforce stereotypes?

Ultimately, are the stories being told in your environment representing each child in a manner that empowers and encourages them? Every child wants to see themselves, their family and those they love in the stories they see. Representation matters. It could encourage children to tell their own stories.

**Action:** We urge you to collect resources that allow you to open conversations with children about diversity, acceptance and equity, and share stories that question biases. This prompts children to explore their own ideas and be curious, and empowers them to share their own identities more freely. When all children feel they are safe and belong at your service, their families will soon feel the same.





# Equality and equity – what are they and how can we practice them in children’s services?

**KERRIE MOUNTFORD and DI BEWSELL**  
Inclusion Professionals,  
KU Children’s Services

The National Quality Framework recognises all children’s capacity and right to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances, cultural backgrounds and abilities. Educators aim for every child and family to feel they belong, be included and see themselves as valued members of the community. But how can we achieve this? Kerrie and Di give us some tips.



Engaging in equality and equity in education and care supports children to achieve their full potential. But what are equality and equity? What’s the difference? Which one is best? How can we embed these principles in our everyday practice?

Let’s start with some definitions.

### Equality

Equality provides every child with equal support, opportunities and resources to meaningfully participate in education and care. Equality aims to provide the same outcomes for everyone – the assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports, opportunities and resources.

We know each child brings their own identity, values, abilities and unique knowledge and experience to the group. So, will providing the same opportunities have the same outcomes for children with varying needs and abilities? Will providing children with the same opportunities overcome barriers to inclusion and participation, or will it create them?

### Equity

Equity recognises that each child has a unique set of circumstances, including family structure, cultural and economic background, gender identity, ability and developmental journey. Therefore, the supports, opportunities and resources made available to them should also be unique and individualised, to support equal outcomes for everyone.

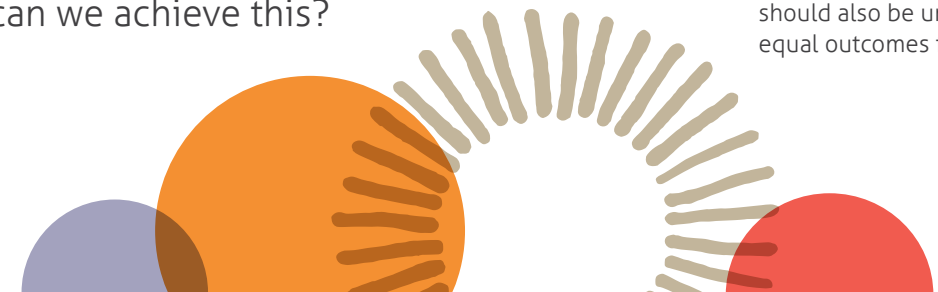


In an equity approach, educators implement responsive, strength-based practices, with individualised opportunities and inclusion strategies, whenever barriers to participation are identified.

**Equity looks and feels a lot like inclusion, right? That’s because equity is the result of inclusion. Inclusion is the practice of ensuring people feel a sense of belonging, striving for equity and enacting respect for diversity. Inclusion is essential to providing high-quality services for children.**

So, what do equality and equity look and feel like in education and care settings? The best way to understand these principles is to examine them in practice.

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## Practice 1: Enrolment

### Equality might look like:

A central online enrolment system that families can access any time of the day, from anywhere.

Enrolment forms are forwarded to management, who keep them secure and collect the appropriate data to fulfil government and regulatory requirements.

### Equity might look like:

Multiple approaches to enrolment processes, which support families for whom English is a second language, who have low literacy levels or no access to the internet.

Families are offered an online enrolment form, an enrolment phone interview, as well as an in-person meeting to complete the form.

Families are encouraged to enrol their children with assistance from a support person where necessary.

Enrolment is embraced as a way to connect and communicate with families, and the information gathered is disseminated safely to educators to support understanding of children's and families' circumstances.



### Reflective prompts:

- Can families access your service's enrolment form in different ways?
- How are families with diverse needs supported to enrol?
- How is information shared with the educators who will be working directly with children and families?
- Whose voices are represented in the enrolment process?

### What can your service do to make your enrolment process more equitable?

## Practice 2: Lunch routine

### Equality might look like:

Regular and predictable routines are planned for mealtimes.

Meals are based around nutritional principles, decisions are made by adults and all children are offered the same food choices.

One or two lunch spaces are offered and educators facilitate transitions.

### Equity might look like:

Mealtimes are embraced and planned for as social and cultural routines.

Lunch routine planning considers all children's sensory sensitivities, cultural needs and social preferences.

Mealtimes are supported by a range of communication strategies, including visuals, direct communication and sound cues.

Educators are seen as an integral part of the routine, sitting with children and supporting their autonomy and sense of community.

Children are regularly consulted about mealtime routines and their input is acted upon.



### Reflective prompts:

- Who is consulted in your service's lunch routine planning? Are all voices represented?
- How are social connectedness and a sense of agency supported by the lunch routine?
- What might the purpose of lunch routines be?
- What resources or assistance is provided to support an inclusive lunch space?

### What can your service do to make your lunch routine more equitable?

## Practice 3: Block play

### Equality might look like:

A designated floor play space with clear expectations. For example, visuals are displayed depicting how many children can play and rules around block height and staying on the mat.

Resources are aesthetically presented to prompt play ideas.

Resources such as people, natural objects and animal figurines are added alongside cars and different sized blocks, to encourage all genders to engage.

Educators engage alongside children, modelling and scaffolding building skills.

### Equity might look like:

A play space that regularly changes location and position, to ensure children with differing physical abilities can engage.

Sensory sensitivities are catered for, such as access to noise-cancelling headphones and fabric being used to reduce sound.

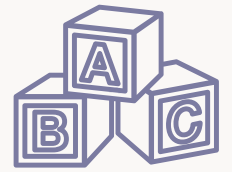
Educators are confident to engage and respond to children's conversations about gender and cultural biases.

Children's social engagement style and developmental stage are considered. For example, small mats are placed alongside the larger mat for children to observe.

Educators are tuned in to children's needs and provide responsive practices.

Children's interests and skills are reflected in the resources available and educators regularly reflect on accessibility and children's participation.

There is a range of resources on offer, to support children's inclusion and engagement in block play that cater to specific needs. For example, visual resources and social stories.



### Reflective prompts:

- How are children's interests, cultures and understandings reflected in your service's block play area?
- Can children with differing levels of mobility easily participate? What about children with unique sensory requirements and social preferences?
- Are educators comfortable discussing equity with children?
- Does your block play area communicate expectations and instructions in multiple ways?

### What can your service do to make block play more equitable?

## Now you know what equality and equity in education and care may look and feel like, how can you harness these principles to support inclusive practice? Here are some strategies:

### Embed a team approach to inclusion

- ✓ Develop and embed inclusion strategies to support consistent inclusive practice
- ✓ Provide mentoring for educators to develop their knowledge and understanding of inclusion
- ✓ Regularly engage in reflective conversations, to encourage educators to critically reflect and learn
- ✓ Conduct regular staff meetings to effectively plan an inclusive program.

### Access support to develop educator capacity and confidence

- ✓ Contact your Inclusion Professional (IP) to discuss Inclusion Support Program options to support your service's needs (if you don't know who your local IP is, call **1800 177 017**)
- ✓ Collaborate with your IP to create a Strategic Inclusion Plan, to develop strategies to overcome barriers to inclusion.

### Explore Innovative Solutions projects

- ✓ Discuss capacity-building opportunities with your IP, for educators to nurture their skills and confidence when supporting children in the care environment.



# Top 10 diverse holiday stories for children

Looking for a way to explore the diversity of festive season celebrations with children? Expand your service's book collection with Lara's top 10 holiday stories from around the world! From cookies to dosas, this collection dishes up the array of ways children and families celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of another.

LARA SPEIRS, Inclusion Professional,  
Community Child Care Association



## 1. What Do You Do to Celebrate?

**Author:** Ashleigh Barton  
**Illustrator:** Martina Heiduczek

**Age range:** 4+ years

**Content:** Belonging, diverse belief systems

Created by a bestselling children's book duo, *What Do You Do to Celebrate?* explores holiday celebrations around the world, focusing on traditions at the end and start of a new year.



## 2. A World of Cookies for Santa

**Author:** M. E. Furman  
**Illustrator:** Susan Gal

**Age range:** 4–7 years

**Content:** Holiday celebrations around the world, baking

*A World of Cookies for Santa* showcases the diverse range of biscuits left out for Santa across the world on Christmas Eve. Includes easy to follow along recipes and the history of each sweet treat!



## 3. Soulful Holidays

**Author:** Ciara L. Hill  
**Illustrator:** Christian Krabbe  
**Age range:** 5–8 years

**Content:** Kwanzaa, Christmas, rhyme, BIPOC central characters

Did you know that many people, particularly in the United States, celebrate both Kwanzaa and Christmas? Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of Black culture, with African-American activist origins. Using rhyme, *Soulful Holidays* offers a joyful glimpse of how some families experience the end-of-year period.



## 4. Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas

**Author:** Pamela Ehrenberg  
**Illustrator:** Anjan Sarkar  
**Age range:** 4–7 years

**Content:** Indian culture, Jewish faith, multicultural families, Hanukkah

*Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas* is a comedy book, following cheeky Indian-Jewish siblings. Learn about some of the holiday traditions from both cultures and how this multicultural family combines them – positively challenge children to think beyond a single representation of faith.

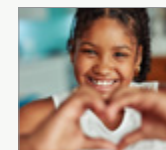


## 5. The Christmas Truck

**Author:** J. B. Blankenship  
**Illustrator:** Cassandre Bolan  
**Age range:** 4–8 years

**Content:** LGBTQIA+ central characters, diverse family types

*The Christmas Truck* emphasises the importance of love, giving and kindness during the holiday time. Come on a journey with a Papa, Dad, Grandma and their child as they work together to help out a stranger in need.



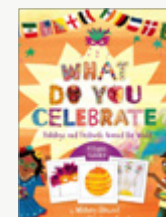
## 6. Holiday Love Around the World

**Author:** LaShaun Jackson  
**Illustrator:** Tyrus Goshay

**Age range:** 3+

**Content:** BIPOC central characters, international celebrations, diverse languages

*Holiday Love Around the World* follows siblings on a journey around the globe, celebrating cultural diversity. The story hones in on the universal themes of love, family and celebration to offer a taste of each country's unique festivities.



## 7. What Do You Celebrate? Holidays and Festivals Around the World

**Author:** Whitney Stewart  
**Illustrator:** Christiane Engel

**Age range:** 5–9 years

**Content:** : Different festivities around the world

*What Do You Celebrate?* introduces us to the different customs, music, dance, food and languages of 14 global festivals – including Fastelavn, Purim, Holi, Eid al-Fitr, Halloween, Day of the Dead and more! Includes some fun and tasty activities.



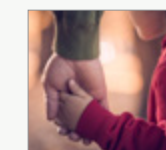
## 8. 'Twas Nochebuena

**Author:** Roseanne Greenfield Thong  
**Illustrator:** Sara Palacios

**Age range:** 3–5 years

**Content:** Bilingual families, Spanish language

*'Twas Nochebuena* is a bilingual story, told in English and Spanish, of food, family and fun. The book uses rhyme and rhythm to tell the tale of a Latino family at Christmas time. This is the perfect book for introducing young readers to Spanish!



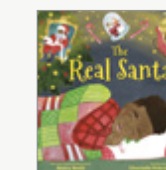
## 9. Welcome Comfort

**Author/Illustrator:** Patricia Polacco

**Age range:** 4–8 years

**Content:** Foster care, diverse family types

*Welcome Comfort* tells the story of a foster child navigating Christmas for the first time without their birth family. It informs young readers of the sorrow and conflict foster children can feel during holiday times, as well as the deep importance of friendship.



## 10. The Real Santa

**Author:** Nancy Redd  
**Illustrator:** Charnelle Pinkney Barlow

**Age range:** 4–8 years

**Content:** BIPOC central characters, cultural identity

*The Real Santa* sets out to answer the question, what does Santa really look like? Does he look like you, or like me? Through the eyes of a young child, the book explores concepts of cultural identity and self-acceptance, and the importance of racial representation.





# How to make the most of your Strategic Inclusion Plan

**JANE TOOP and DANI CAMPBELL**  
Inclusion Professionals,  
Yooralla

Can children's services plan for inclusion? Yes! The Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) is a resource used to do just that. Here, Jane and Dani ask us to reflect on key SIP items through a community outreach lens, to develop a meaningful, engaging SIP.

## Service profile

Your service profile is completed annually or whenever significant change occurs within your service. Use this space to celebrate your broader inclusive practices and community outreach efforts, while identifying future goals. You can use your service profile to:

- **Celebrate your achievements.** What does your service do on a daily basis to show commitment to the inclusion of all children?
- **Revisit your service philosophy and inclusion policies.** What do your inclusion policies look like in practice? What parts of your Quality Improvement Plan demonstrate inclusive practice? Can you incorporate these into your SIP?
- **Consider your physical environment.** How are your learning environments organised to encourage participation and promote interaction? How are educators changing their practices to support all children and families?

- **Reflect on the inclusive practices you want to learn more about.** What opportunities are available to support your learning? Who can you connect with?
- **Consider your local community.** What resources can you access to gain an understanding of your community context? How do you reach out to families and services in your wider community?
- **Reflect on the families accessing your service.** What community connections could you make to better support all families?

## Care environment

Building awareness of your existing inclusive practices – as well as any barriers to inclusion – in your learning and care environment supports your team to identify goals and implement strategies to strengthen inclusive practice. To document your barriers, strategies and actions, you might:

### BARRIERS

- **Step back and observe the physical environment as a whole.** What do you notice? What is happening? Are there any challenges?
- **Observe any challenges for educators.** What happens when your team walk into the learning environment, or leave the space?
- **Observe any challenges for children.** How are they participating? Do you notice any key stressors in their day? How do they build relationships with their educators and peers? How do they participate in transitions? What does this look like for each individual child?

- **Reflect upon your practice as an educator.** What are the challenges for me as an educator as I walk into or leave the learning environment? How does this influence my participation in the program? How does my practice influence an individual child's development and behaviour?

### STRATEGIES

- **Reflect upon current practices.** What would your team like to implement? What works well, inspires and shifts your inclusive practices?
- **Consider different times of the day.** What are the children's inclusion needs throughout the day? How do the children currently engage and participate? How are you prioritising relationships within each transition?
- **Decide on your inclusion goals.** What is the goal? What is restricting you from achieving this?
- **Invigate your inclusion practices.** How can you shift your team's practices to support your goals?
- **Consider your team's communication strategies.** How will you communicate inclusion planning effectively amongst your team of educators?
- **Access the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF).** If you're using your SIP to support an application for additional resources, have you included the IDF as a potential strategy? You can contact your Inclusion Professional (IP) anytime to discuss your funding options.
- **Access the Specialist Equipment Library (SEL).** Could specialist equipment support inclusion for children within your learning environment? Contact your IP to access the SEL.

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**ACTIONS**

- **Write down what your team will change.** How will this be different or more effective? What practices will address the identified barrier to inclusion?
- **Identify when and how they will change their practice.** What will this look like at different times of the day? E.g., unpack your day, daily living routines, transitions, interactions, etc.
- **Consider the children’s skills and abilities.** What educator practices will support, guide, scaffold and build on children’s individual skills and abilities? How will educators support the participation and engagement of all children?
- **If your SIP is supporting funding for an additional educator...** how have you demonstrated the need for an increased ratio during different times of the day?
- **Reflect on information provided by allied health professionals and families.** What are the goals they want to achieve? What are their strategies? Are there resources that could be used across your learning environment?

**Progress notes**

Progress notes should be taken regularly throughout the development of your SIP. Use these notes to identify the strategies that are working well, those that need to be revisited and modified, or if there are gaps in your strategic planning. Your notes may include:

- **Reflection.** How have you progressed the actions? What has worked well and why?
- **Consideration.** Are there any gaps or practices you could have implemented differently?
- **Future action.** What will be next? How can your team build on the strategies you have implemented? How will your learnings inform your future practice? Drill down and delve deeper!

Your SIP is a reflective tool for embedding inclusion – it’s an ongoing journey that guides your service to promote engagement and participation for all children.



Remember, your IP is always available to support you in the development of your SIP. If you don’t know who your local IP is, call **1800 177 017**.



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