



Inclusion Ready: Planning for an Inclusive Environment Educators Toolkit



19 positive affirmations

We belong

{ WE ARE
SAFE }

♥♥♥
We have
caring
hearts

We are
brave
enough
to try

We can
do hard
things

💪
We are
stronger than
we think

We spread kindness
everywhere we go

We ask for
help when
we need it

We improve
with lots of
practice

We love
to learn

We embrace
our differences

We are
helpful

We
work as
a team

We keep trying, even when things are hard

We listen to
each other

Mistakes help us
learn and grow



Nice deep
breaths help
us to stay calm
and peaceful

We are all
equally
important

Being
ourselves is a
superpower



Access free inclusion support – including mentoring and resources –
from the Victorian Inclusion Agency on 1800 177 017
www.viac.com.au

{ VICTORIAN
INCLUSION
AGENCY }

One For All

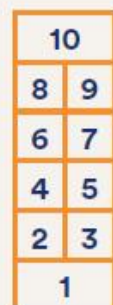
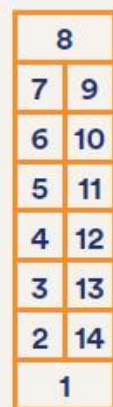


How to play Hopscotch for the Mob

Setting up

STEP 1

Design your hopscotch course. It can be any shape or any direction. The standard one has 10 squares but it can have as many as you like! Try these different designs:



STEP 2

Draw your design on concrete with chalk.

STEP 3

Replace the numbers with animal tracks. Here are some examples:



Kangaroo



Snake



Emu



Goanna



Human



Dingo



Kosla



Crocodile



Echidna

Instructions

- 1 Throw a flat stone or similar marker to land on the first square. It has to land inside the square without touching the border or bouncing out. If you don't get it in the lines, you lose your turn and must pass the marker onto the next person.
- 2 The animal track in the square the marker lands on is the animal you have to be while you take your turn. Move through the course, skipping the square the marker landed on. If you step on or outside a line, or step on the wrong square, you lose your turn.
- 3 When you get to the last square, turn around and make your way back through the course. Don't forget to pick up the marker on the way so you can hand it to the next person in line when you finish your turn.
- 4 If you successfully completed your turn with the marker on the first square, throw your marker onto the second square the next time around. Your goal is to complete the course with the marker on each square. The first person to do this wins the game!



Want more Aboriginal education activities like this?

Go to www.vaeai.org.au > Aboriginal education activities

10 ways to support attachment through curriculum planning and play



TOP TIP!

When building attachment with children, it's all about the relationships. Showing genuine interest, warmth and connection is key!

1 Set up a space for each child (e.g., locker, basket) where they can keep things that are important to them

2 Display objects that hold importance or familiarity for each child (e.g., photos, books)

3 Play games that mirror each other's actions (e.g., back-and-forth ball games, 'Simon says', or call-and-response play such as drumming)

4 Play games that require shared attention (e.g., one person blowing a bubble and the other catching the bubbles or trying to catch them on a bubble wand)

5 Sing songs and nursery rhymes that use touch (e.g., 'Round and round the garden' and 'This little piggy went to market')

6 Play games that mimic the 'going out to explore and then coming back' attachment cycle (e.g., 'Hide and seek' and 'What's the time Mr Wolf')

7 Set up activities that allow children to determine proximity and touch (e.g., painting each other's faces (you can do this with water and paintbrushes if paints are not appropriate))

8 Play games that mirror actions between a caregiver and child or between children (e.g., clapping games for older children)

9 Create comforting spaces where children can 'just be' (e.g., cushions, couches)

10 Play games that use touch as a form of care (e.g., using a doctor's kit with pretend bandages to wrap each other carefully)

REMEMBER

Touch, even in games, can be triggering for some children. It's important to pay attention to the way the child responds. With some children, it can be the best to wait for them to initiate physical touch or play themselves.

This poster draws ideas from 'Trauma, attachment and supporting connection in the early years' by Bryony Catlin, published in *Embrace* magazine. Read the full article to learn more: viac.com.au/sites/default/files/2024-02/VIA-Embrace-Magazine-Edition-14-Summer-2024.pdf



One For All



yooralla

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.

Steps to enter play

As mentioned, there are many micro-skills children of all ages need to develop to successfully enter and maintain group play. For younger children, these skills are emerging and need a lot of support to develop. We expect older children to have social skills already, yet some may have missed out on vital years of early learning to lay these foundations.

Use this table to reflect on the steps to join in on play. How do your teaching practices, learning environments, routines and transitions support skill development for all children to start taking these steps?

Steps	What might a child in my program be thinking or feeling?	As the educator, how do I purposefully teach children these micro-skills? Use this column to jot down your strategies and then use them in your Strategic Inclusion Plan
Understand that other children can be used as a resource in play	I don't notice other children. I can play how I like and take my time.	
Recognising the feeling of wanting to join in	I see other children and what they are doing looks interesting. I'm anxious about how to join in.	
Watch the play	This looks fun but it looks confusing too. How will I know what to do?	
Understand what the play is about	I need to figure out who is doing what. What are the rules to this play? How will I keep up?	
Consider a few courses of action	I could follow what the others are doing, or I could tell them what I know. I could bring something with me to join in.	
Choose a course of action	I will take my shovel. That will get their attention and they might like my help.	
Wait for a natural break in the play	Do I go slow, or jump in?	
Begin to behave in the same way as the others in the group	If I do the same thing as the other kids, I will look like I fit in.	
Ask relevant questions about the play	If I ask questions, they will think I am interested.	
Bring something to the play	I need something special that will show them I want to play too. Wow, I've joined in. This feels good!	

Steps to maintain play

Once children are engaged in play, they then need to stay in the play. There are a lot of factors to consider in maintaining play with other children. Some children have similar ideas, while some will share differing ideas which may change how the play evolves. There are nine steps for maintaining play.

Steps	What might a child in my program be thinking or feeling?	As the educator, how do I purposefully teach children these micro-skills? Use this column to jot down your strategies and then use them in your Strategic Inclusion Plan
Be able to take turns in leader/follower roles with others	Can I understand and keep up with the play? Can I take on the role they want me to?	
Understand that there are rules to the play	I'm not sure if I understand what the leader is expecting me to do.	
Be able to share	I want to keep using my shovel, but Kirra wants to use it too. What if she doesn't give it back?	
Be able to take turns in action and conversation	Will they hear my ideas?	
Understand the roles of each of the other players	What is Kirra doing?	
Understand that other children may have a different point of view	Kirra is using the shovel in a different way from me. Is her way wrong?	
Cooperate with other children	I really want a turn.	
Be able to cope with changes to the rules as the play goes on	If we did it this way, does my role change?	
Be able to contribute to making or changing the rules as the play goes on	I will try out my idea again. Working together is good.	

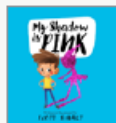
🔄 Flip over to find out how you can turn this into a team activity!

Diversify your reading with these LGBTQIA+ books



Being represented in stories, especially from childhood, can have a profound impact on a child's sense of learning, belonging and confidence. There are so many fantastic LGBTQIA+ children's books out there – but here are some of our favourites!

BY LARA SPEIRS, Inclusion Professional,
Community Child Care Association



My shadow is pink by Scott Stuart

Themes: Gender identity; acceptance of diversity

Suggested reading age: 4+

Inspired by the author's child, this story features themes of self-discovery and the importance of unconditional love, encouraging children to embrace their true selves.



My shadow is purple by Scott Stuart

Themes: Non-binary genders; acceptance of diversity

Suggested reading age: 4+

This book is about self-acceptance and diversity through the story of a child discovering and embracing their unique identity and interests.

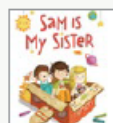


Call me Max by Kyle Lukoff

Themes: Transgender child (assigned female at birth); social transitioning

Suggested reading age: 5+

Call me Max is about a transgender boy who bravely comes out to everyone at school, with help from his supportive teacher and friends.



Sam is my sister by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Themes: Transgender child (assigned male at birth); sibling support; social transitioning

Suggested reading age: 4+

This story is about a transgender girl named Sam, and her sister who writes about how they support each other and deal with challenges together.



An ABC of families by Paulina Morgan

Themes: Diverse family types

Suggested reading age: 4+

An ABC of families teaches children about different types of families using the alphabet, showing that families can be diverse and unique in many ways.



Enough love? by Maggie Hatchings

Themes: Same-sex relationship (male); parent coming out; divorce

Suggested reading age: 3+

Enough love is about a child who learns that love can be abundant and unconditional, no matter the circumstances or challenges faced.



The girl with two dads by Mel Elliot

Themes: Same-sex parent relationship (male)

Suggested reading age: 3+

This book is about a girl who lives happily with her two dads, showing that families come in different forms and are filled with love and care.



Queer heroes by Arabelle Sicardi

Themes: Queer history; positive LGBTQIA+ role models

Suggested reading age: 4+

Queer heroes celebrates the lives of trailblazing LGBTQIA+ icons throughout history, with inspiring stories of bravery and resilience.

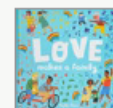


Pink is for boys by Robb Pearlman

Themes: Gender bias

Suggested reading age: 4+

This book shows how colours like pink and blue can be enjoyed by everyone, encouraging children to like what they like without worrying about stereotypes.



Love makes a family by Sophie Beer

Themes: Diverse family types

Suggested reading age: 1+

This story by Sophie Beer shows that families can be made up of different people who love each other very much, no matter how they are connected.



Julian is a mermaid by Sophie Love

Themes: Same-sex parent relationship (male)

Suggested reading age: 3+

Julian is a mermaid is about a boy who loves mermaids and dreams of being one. He embarks on a journey of self-discovery and acceptance with the support of his abuela (grandmother).



Julian at a wedding by Jessica Love

Themes: Gender norms/bias; questioning gender identity

Suggested reading age: 3+

This story follows Julian as he attends a wedding with his abuela (grandmother), where he embraces his unique self-expression and learns about the power of love and celebration.



It feels good to be yourself by Theresa Thorn

Themes: Gender identity; transgender child; non-binary child

Suggested reading age: 4+

It feels good to be yourself tells the story of Ruthie, who learns about different gender identities through the experiences of her friends and family.

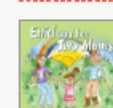


Introducing teddy by Jessica Walton

Themes: Gender identity; acceptance and friendship

Suggested reading age: 3+

This story is about Thomas, a teddy who shares with his friends that inside, he feels more like Tilly, a female teddy.



Enid and her two mums by Jessica Skogstad

Themes: Same-sex parent relationship (female)

Suggested reading age: 2+

Enid and her two mums is about a girl who happily lives with her two mothers, celebrating their love and their family bond.

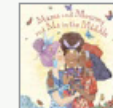


We are allies by Taimani Emerald

Themes: Introduction to allyship

Suggested reading age: 2+

This book teaches children how to support and stand up for each other through kindness and understanding among friends and classmates.



Mama and mommy and me in the middle by Zoe Lacour

Themes: Separation anxiety; same-sex parent relationship (female)

Suggested reading age: 3+

This story is about a family with two mums, celebrating their everyday adventures and the special bond they share with their child.



10 low- and no-cost activities and resources for sensory play

Sensory play is a fun and beneficial way to support the development of children's emerging gross and fine motor skills, as well as their social and emotional skills. Educators can support children who have emotional regulation difficulties by allowing them to explore and ignite their senses through sensory play.

Here are some low- and no-cost ideas to help children regulate their emotions and senses:

1 Water play: Water is one of the most simple and accessible ingredients to use for sensory play. Try freezing it, melting it, adding colour, bubbles or scents to it for different textures and smells.



2 Sand play: Playing with sand can be a calming sensory experience for children who are anxious or nervous. Try setting children up with objects in a sand tray and asking what they are doing as they play. This can help children explore and express their thoughts and feelings.



3 Fidget toys: Educators can provide children with access to fidget toys to aid their concentration and emotional regulation. There are lots of different types of fidget toys now available on the market.



4 Noise-cancelling headphones Noise-cancelling headphones can help children who become overwhelmed by noise to manage their emotional regulation. If possible, have more than one pair accessible within your environment so several children can access them at once.



Helpful links:

- Crunchy foods: patches.com.au/embracing-the-crunch-how-crunchy-lunchbox-snacks-can-benefit-your-child
- Further information on sensory play: oac.edu.au/news-views/sensory-play
- Sand play: raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/sensory-play/sand-tray-play-activity-children-disability-autism
- Sensory swinging: sourcekids.com.au/ways-a-sensory-swing-can-help-your-child

Did you know...

Sensory play aligns with the five common senses, along with additional senses related to balance and proprioception (the perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body).

5 Homemade play dough: An all-time favourite! Increase the sensory experience of play dough by including real herbs such as lavender or rosemary.



6 Crunchy foods such as carrots and apples: In addition to the nutritional benefits, crunchy foods can boost sensory stimulation, sharpen focus and enhance emotional regulation.



7 Slime, putty or goop: Slime is a fun, tactile play experience which helps children build hand and finger strength. Get creative and make it from scratch! It can be made using simple ingredients such as cornflour and water.



8 Sensory bottles: Sensory bottles can support mindfulness and self-regulation. Make your own using water, oil or liquid soap, food colouring and sand. Secure the lid well, tip it upside down, and see the sand fall slowly to the bottom.



9 Swinging, rocking and spinning: These repetitive movements support children's vestibular stimulation (which influences emotion) and can aid in sensory regulation. For example, the back-and-forth motion of swinging can help regulate children's sensory input and soothe their nerves.



10 Heavy work: Heavy work consists of movement that involves the larger muscles of the body. Heavy work activities have many benefits for children, such as increasing attention, focus and calm. Activities could include wall push-ups or chair push-ups, holding a weighted stuffed animal, a game of tug of war, doing yoga or going on animal walks.



Some children may have a sensory sensitivity or need. Every child who has a sensory sensitivity is different and their needs may change over time. It's always best to work alongside families and allied health professionals to support the individual needs of all children.

CHECKLIST:

How multicultural is your learning environment?

Use this handy checklist, from Inclusion Professional Nahah Hussain, to see how well you embed diversity and inclusion in your education and care service.

✓ Children:

- ☐ Our staff are aware of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children in their care
- ☐ Our staff are encouraged to enhance their understanding of the cultures represented in the service and other diverse cultures
- ☐ We have staff who speak more than one language and encourage them to use their language with the children who speak the same language
- ☐ We involve local council and community groups to gain inspiration and better support children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- ☐ Children are encouraged to develop awareness of their identity and express interest in the cultural heritage of others
- ☐ We provide small group experiences to teach children their language
- ☐ Resources, materials, and activities reflect the cultural diversity of our children and families.

✓ Families:

- ☐ We embrace the interests and cultural backgrounds of families, making sure they feel valued and understood
- ☐ Families are involved in decisions that impact their children
- ☐ Families can share information about their child's needs, routine, key family events and the family's cultural practices
- ☐ We understand the cultural demographics of the area of our service
- ☐ Our Visual Orientation Booklet illustrates how informative and engaging our service can be. Presenting it to CALD families helps build connections and enhances our understanding of their needs.

✓ Visual displays:

- ☐ We share posters, notices, and pamphlets in relevant community languages
- ☐ The cultural identity of children at our service is visible in the learning environment, and children and families are encouraged to contribute

- ☐ We have pictures and display boards that reflect multicultural Australia
- ☐ We display people of diverse backgrounds engaged in familiar everyday activities
- ☐ We have visual representations of a diverse range of cultures and in different languages to ensure families feel culturally safe and welcome.

✓ Cultural safety:

- ☐ We have zero tolerance for discrimination
- ☐ We have policies and procedures in place to address cultural inclusion
- ☐ We provide training to educators and staff on cultural competency
- ☐ Our educators use the information gathered in enrolment forms to support and promote children's cultural learning
- ☐ We use interpreters to support engagement and planning with families
- ☐ Bilingual children are encouraged to communicate in a variety of ways
- ☐ We celebrate and participate in culturally diverse special events.

✓ Educator development:

- ☐ We support educators with professional development and training on cultural diversity and inclusive practices
- ☐ We regularly reflect on practices relating to diversity and inclusion

- ☐ We seek out local services and collaborate with others in the community to support cultural inclusion and diversity
- ☐ We seek out bicultural support from agencies when we need extra help.

✓ Programming and activities:

- ☐ Our educators plan and implement programs that reflect the cultural diversity of children and families
- ☐ We learn songs, dances and play music from a mix of cultures and hold group times and tell stories in the diverse languages of our families
- ☐ We use visual and tactile resources that reflect the multicultural backgrounds of our community
- ☐ The clothing in our home corner represents different cultures. We include a mix of everyday wear, festival and celebration attire, seasonal clothing, pieces of fabric, shoes, hats, and jewellery
- ☐ Children can make and try foods from other cultures
- ☐ We use cooking and eating utensils commonly used in the homes of people from diverse cultures, like a wok, chopsticks, or coffee pot. We also have diverse representational food, like wool spaghetti and cloth pita bread.



Need help with any of the above?

Call 1800 177 017 for free mentoring and program support from our expert Inclusion Professionals.



CHECKLIST:

How to create an inclusive environment

Use this handy checklist to embed inclusion at your education and care service.

✓ EXPERIENCES

- ☉ We offer a balance of individual and group experiences (art and craft, books, blocks, cubby house/quiet space, games, stories, songs, etc.) that are reflective of children's cultural backgrounds and needs
- ☉ Experiences are inviting and are reset during the day
- ☉ We give children the opportunity to continue with an activity they're deeply engaged in
- ☉ We regularly modify and extend experiences to support children's interests and participation

✓ ROUTINES AND VISUALS

- ☉ Strong routines and rhythms help the day flow
- ☉ We support children's needs/expectations using a visual routine about the day

✓ TRANSITIONS

- ☉ We give prior warnings before transitions (*tip: have you considered the use of visuals or timers?*)

✓ MODELLING

- ☉ We regularly model social/play skills, communication skills and strategies to support children to regulate their emotions

✓ CONNECTION VS CORRECTION

- ☉ We connect with children regularly to support belonging and encourage positive behaviours (*tip: ways to connect might include positive praise, a thumbs up, a reassuring smile, joining in play, etc.*)

✓ CONSISTENCY

- ☉ We have access to a consistent educator/s within our learning space to support our program delivery and strong relationships
- ☉ Our routines, visuals and programming expectations are clear and consistent

✓ POSITIONING

- ☉ We use the 'one up, two down' concept to stay connected with children in a busy environment
- ☉ Educators are aware of their expectations for positioning
- ☉ We are positioned to support children's emotional regulation and social interactions, and to modify or extend on these

✓ TEAMWORK

- ☉ When it comes to our expectations, goals and our daily program, we're all on the same page
- ☉ We have regular team check-ins to update one another, share constructive feedback and offer support

✓ SUPPORT

- ☉ We access free mentoring and program support through the Victorian Inclusion Agency to support every child, including those presenting with challenging or trauma-related behaviours, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children with a disability or developmental delay
- ☉ We have a Strategic Inclusion Plan to ensure all children can meaningfully participate and feel that they belong
- ☉ We have considered accessing Innovative Solutions funding to address barriers to inclusion at our service (*hint: you might like to use this funding on bi-cultural support, translation, professional development or coaching around challenging behaviours, trauma or educator wellbeing, etc.*)
- ☉ We have developed a Reconciliation Action Plan through the free Narragunnawali program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to feel welcome and ensure all children learn about the histories and cultures of Australia's First Nations peoples
- ☉ We support our team's wellbeing and mental health by accessing free support from organisations like Be You



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CHECKLIST: Rainbow families

BY SAM WILLIAMS AND LARA SPIERS
Inclusion Professionals,
Community Child Care Association

This checklist is designed to inspire your service to create a truly inclusive environment for all definitions and types of families. Use this tool to reflect on your team's readiness to welcome, celebrate and support current and future families, ensuring all who join your community feel valued and respected.

And remember, while you may be familiar with the term 'rainbow families', it's important to keep in mind the diversity within these families. They can include same-sex parents, single LGBTQIA+ carers, LGBTQIA+ children, transgender or gender-diverse parents and children growing up in diverse family structures.

Visibility and representation

- Do your classroom materials (books, posters and learning resources) include representations of LGBTQIA+ families?
- Does your curriculum include lessons and activities about diversity and acceptance that explore different family structures, including LGBTQIA+ families?
- Are signs and symbols around your service inclusive and do they signal a welcoming environment for rainbow families (e.g., displaying rainbow flags or 'everyone is welcome here' stickers)?



HINT: Download and print your free ['This space celebrates diversity'](#) poster, ['All are welcome here'](#) poster or ['Everyone belongs here'](#) poster today!

Policies and procedures

- Does your service's anti-discrimination policy explicitly include protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity and family structure?
- Are there procedures in place for addressing any form of discrimination or harassment experienced by rainbow families?

Staff knowledge and training

- Have all staff members been made aware of your service's stance on LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and awareness?
- Have all staff members participated in training on best practices to support rainbow families (from an LGBTQIA+ organisation)?



Inclusive forms and documentation for families

- Are family forms and documents designed to be inclusive of diverse family structures (e.g. options for listing 'Parent/Guardian' instead of 'Mother/Father')?
- Do all forms and documentation use inclusive pronouns, including for children i.e. 'they' by default rather than 'his/her'?

Connecting with community events and organisations

- Does your service participate in or support LGBTQIA+ community events, such as Pride?
- Are connections with local LGBTQIA+ organisations part of your service's network to ensure resources and support are culturally competent and appropriate?

Incorporating rainbow family perspectives in activities and events

- Are special occasions and events (like Mother's Day and Father's Day) approached in a way that is inclusive of diverse family dynamics?
- Does your service actively engage rainbow families in events and decision-making processes?
- Do rainbow families have opportunities to contribute to learning and general community events (not only rainbow events)?

Actively supporting rainbow families

- Is there a clear point of contact for rainbow families to discuss their needs and concerns within the service without judgement?
- Does your service share information on support groups or links to external LGBTQIA+-friendly services and resources that all families can access?

Family feedback

- Does your service have a mechanism for receiving feedback from families on inclusivity issues and is this feedback regularly reviewed and acted upon?
- How does your service communicate its commitment to inclusivity to the families it serves?

WHAT'S NEXT? Consider discussing these questions during a team meeting to foster collaborative and critical reflection. This will help strengthen your inclusive practices to ensure all diverse and rainbow families feel safe, supported and celebrated within your service.



Feel unsure about how to move forward with supporting rainbow families at your service both now and in the future?

Your Inclusion Professional can help! Give us a call on **1800 177 017** to find out more.

Top 10 Aboriginal children's books for Victoria

Here are our top 10 children's books written by Victorian Aboriginal people who feel a sense of belonging to their nations, clans, land and culture.

MATILDA DARVALL, Senior Policy Officer & MERLE HALL, Koorie Inclusion Consultant, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)



1. Our Home, Our Heartbeat

Adam Briggs / Kate Moon (illustrator) / Rachael Sarra (illustrator)

Briggs is a well-known and well-accomplished Vorta Vorta rapper from Shepparton in Victoria. *Our Home, Our Heartbeat* is his first children's book, and is adapted from his song 'The Children Came Back'. In a celebration of Indigenous culture, this book features Aboriginal people who have achieved and succeeded in a variety of fields. It's a fantastic resource to use in an early learning setting because educators and teachers can engage children through the music as well as the inspirational story. The National Gallery of Victoria has recorded Briggs reading his book, which can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/OurHomeBook>



2. Djambi: The Different Kookaburra

Damian Amamoo

This storybook is set in the bush in Barmah on the Murray River and is based on a family of kookaburras. Djambi, the main character, finds it difficult to express his feelings and emotions, and his squawk sounds different to the other birds. This book has been written to address the topic of autism in a way that is culturally relevant and sensitive, and there are numerous culturally-specific references –

both traditional and contemporary – that help make this book warmly familiar to Aboriginal children. It's a positive, insightful and engaging book for teachers, families and young children, and delivers an important message about appreciating diversity. A PDF version of the book can be accessed for free:

<http://bit.ly/DjambiBook>



3. Adventures of the Little Black Trackas

Merle Hall / Gary Saunders (illustrator)

The Adventures of the Little Black Trackas is a cultural education kit for children in the early years, aged 0–8 years. Words used in the book are in both English and Bangerang language. The kit contains five books and includes a CD with each story, as told by a different child. Each book is beautifully illustrated and features a little black tracka tracking a variety of animals, insects, bird feathers, water animals or family members. The books are packaged together in a folder that also contains activity ideas for use by early childhood educators.



4. Welcome to Country

Aunty Joy Murphy / Lisa Kennedy (illustrator)

Welcome to Country, written by Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy, is a storybook that gently teaches children about

the importance of understanding where we come from and how to relate to the land and water surrounding us all. Woiwurrung words, such as 'wominjeka', are introduced through the story, and we are offered an insight into how Aboriginal communities relate to one another through acknowledging territorial boundaries, seeking permission to enter other lands and performing Welcomes to Country. A video of Aunty Joy reading her book can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/WelcomeToCountryBook>



5. Took the Children Away

Archie Roach / Ruby Hunter (illustrator) with paintings by Peter Hudson

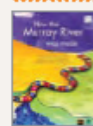
Took the Children Away is a story written by well-known singer Archie Roach, and illustrated by his late partner Ruby Hunter. It tells the heartbreaking story of Uncle Archie's experience of being forcibly taken from his family when he was two years old. Many people will have heard Uncle Archie's award-winning song of the same name, on which this book is based. This book can be used to introduce the topic of the Stolen Generations to children. A video of Uncle Archie talking about and reading his book can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/TheyTookTheChildrenAway>



6. Auslan and Yorta Yorta Language

Merle Miller

This is a unique book that teaches readers about both Auslan and Vorta Vorta language. Each page displays a photograph of a young, deaf Aboriginal girl who demonstrates how to sign Auslan for phrases such as, 'Hello how are you?' It then describes the Vorta Vorta language for the same phrase. There is also an accompanying explanation on each page of how to sign using Auslan. This book is great for teaching children in education and care services about people who have hearing impairments and the different ways in which we all communicate.



7. How the Murray Was Made: A Bangerang Story

Irene Thomas / Robert Brown (illustrator)

This is a book that explains the creation story of how the Murray River was made. It tells of how an old woman was walking

with her dingos, looking for grubs and berries. She walked for a long time dragging a digging stick behind her, which made a track along the ground. The sound of the stick woke the snake, and he became very angry and thrashed to and fro, causing the track to get bigger. Soon after, it rained and this was how the Murray River was made. This is an engaging and interesting way for educators and teachers to introduce the topic of belief systems.



8. Respect

Aunty Faye Muir / Sue Lawson / Lisa Kennedy (illustrator)

Aunty Faye is a Boon Wurrung and Wamba Wamba Elder

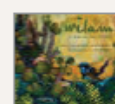
who wrote this book with Sue Lawson, an award-winning children's author. This book teaches us how to respect our Elders, our family, our friends, the Country on which we live, and most importantly – ourselves.



9. Family

Aunty Faye Muir / Sue Lawson / Jasmine Seymour (illustrator)

Family is a follow up to *Respect*, and both books are part of a four-book series called 'Our Place'. This book teaches us about the different roles people in our families play in forming who we are now and who we become in the future, through an Aboriginal perspective. It also introduces the idea of diversity amongst people, families and communities, using the concepts of language and Country.



10. Wilam, A Birrarung Story

Aunty Joy Murphy / Andrew Kelly / Lisa Kennedy (illustrator)

This book tells the story of Melbourne's beautiful Yarra River, and features Woiwurrung language to explain its rich history. Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle and creator spirit, is a key character, along with other animals. It's a wonderful storybook to use with children in an early childhood setting because it's a culturally-inclusive way to think about an important landmark in Melbourne.

CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS: Reflections and actions

How inclusive are the environments at your children's service? Use the reflective questions on the left to identify aspects of inclusive environments, then implement the actions on the right to start creating them!



Reflections

Do all children learn new skills as they confidently participate in activities that match their strengths, interests and abilities?

✓ Reflect on families' 'about me' forms when planning activities, to ensure they match children's individual strengths, interests and abilities

✓ Utilise conversations with families and children and your observations to ensure children are confidently participating in activities and learning new skills

Does the physical environment support the needs and abilities of all educators, children and families that access the space?

✓ Ensure your spaces cater for wheelchair access

✓ Provide a range of activities and resources at different levels and abilities

✓ Reflect on your indoor and outdoor program. Do all children have the opportunity to meaningfully participate?

Do all children have a voice and input in the program? Can you see evidence of this when you look around your environments?

✓ Engage children in reflective conversations about the program. Do they enjoy the activities? Are their needs being met?

✓ Collaborate with children to make the space reflective of their engagement in the program (e.g. display children's art on the walls)

Actions

Reflections

How is feedback sourced and incorporated into the program?

✓ Survey children and families about their experience with the service and program

✓ If children or family members give you feedback during a casual/incidental conversation, make sure to note it down

✓ Dedicate time for your team to reflect on feedback and make changes

Is your environment reflective of the cultural diversity of your children and families?

✓ Stock your spaces with music, books, art, food and visual tools that are reflective of all children's and families' cultural backgrounds

✓ Invest time into getting to know families and their individual backgrounds and ask them about their needs

✓ Check out this resource for guidance: Cultural connections – Booklet: bit.ly/3usHVQE

Do your environments reflect the values and beliefs of all children and families?

✓ Speak to all families about the significant dates and events they celebrate

✓ Research significant dates and events and incorporate celebrations into your program

✓ Reflect on your indoor and outdoor program. Do all children have the opportunity to meaningfully participate?

Contact your local Inclusion Professional on 1800 177 017 to start a larger conversation about creating inclusive environments at your service.

How diverse is your children's book collection?

Getting diverse books into the hands of young readers promotes empathy and acceptance from an early age. So how inclusive are the books in your service's collection? Take these four simple steps to find out.



STEP 1

Divide your books into those with human main characters and those with non-human main characters (animals, mythical creatures, vehicles, etc.)

STEP 2

Split your books with non-human main characters into gender (where possible)

STEP 3

Split your books with human main characters by:

- Gender
- Race (thinking about representations of both cultural diversity and First Nations Australians)
- Disability representation (thinking about representations of both physical disability and neurodiversity)
- LGBTQIA+ representation
- Family diversity representation

STEP 4

Review your results!
How did your bookshelves stack up?
Are there any gaps?



Extra questions to reflect on

- Do the books in your collection celebrate the diversity of children and families in your community?
- Do they offer a window into the lives of unfamiliar people and places?
- Are any written or illustrated by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people? What about people of colour, or people from different nations and religions?
- Think about the subject matter of your diverse books. Do all your books featuring First Nations stories focus on the Dreamtime? Do you have any books featuring diverse characters that are not primarily about race or prejudice? Do any contain hurtful racial or ethnic stereotypes?



TAKE ACTION

Is it time to diversify your bookshelf? What could your first step be? Write it in the box now!



Inclusive practice checklist

Are you ready to strengthen inclusive practice across your entire service? Check off all of the examples below that already apply to your service – well done! If any practices below are unfamiliar, jot them down and set aside some time to chat with your Inclusion Professional about how to achieve every inclusive practice on the list.



LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- ☐ When you need to communicate with families, do you share information in a language that is accessible to them?
- ☐ Are your communications delivered in a way that is inclusive of diverse family situations (e.g., instead of addressing communication to 'mums and dads', try 'families', 'guardians' or 'adults')?
- ☐ Do you model inclusive language when addressing groups of children? Instead of 'boys and girls', could you use terms such as 'everyone' or 'team'?



ALL-ABILITIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

- ☐ Do you have different methods of delivering instructions to communicate according to children's needs and differences? (E.g., spoken instructions, visual cues, songs, etc.)
- ☐ Do you plan learning experiences that can be modified or adapted to meet a variety of needs?
- ☐ For children who require additional support, is this done in a way that minimises impact to the child's day?
- ☐ Do you encourage all children to engage in tasks and activities as independently as possible, at their own pace, only providing support when needed?
- ☐ Does your service have a quiet space for children to co-regulate if they feel big emotions?

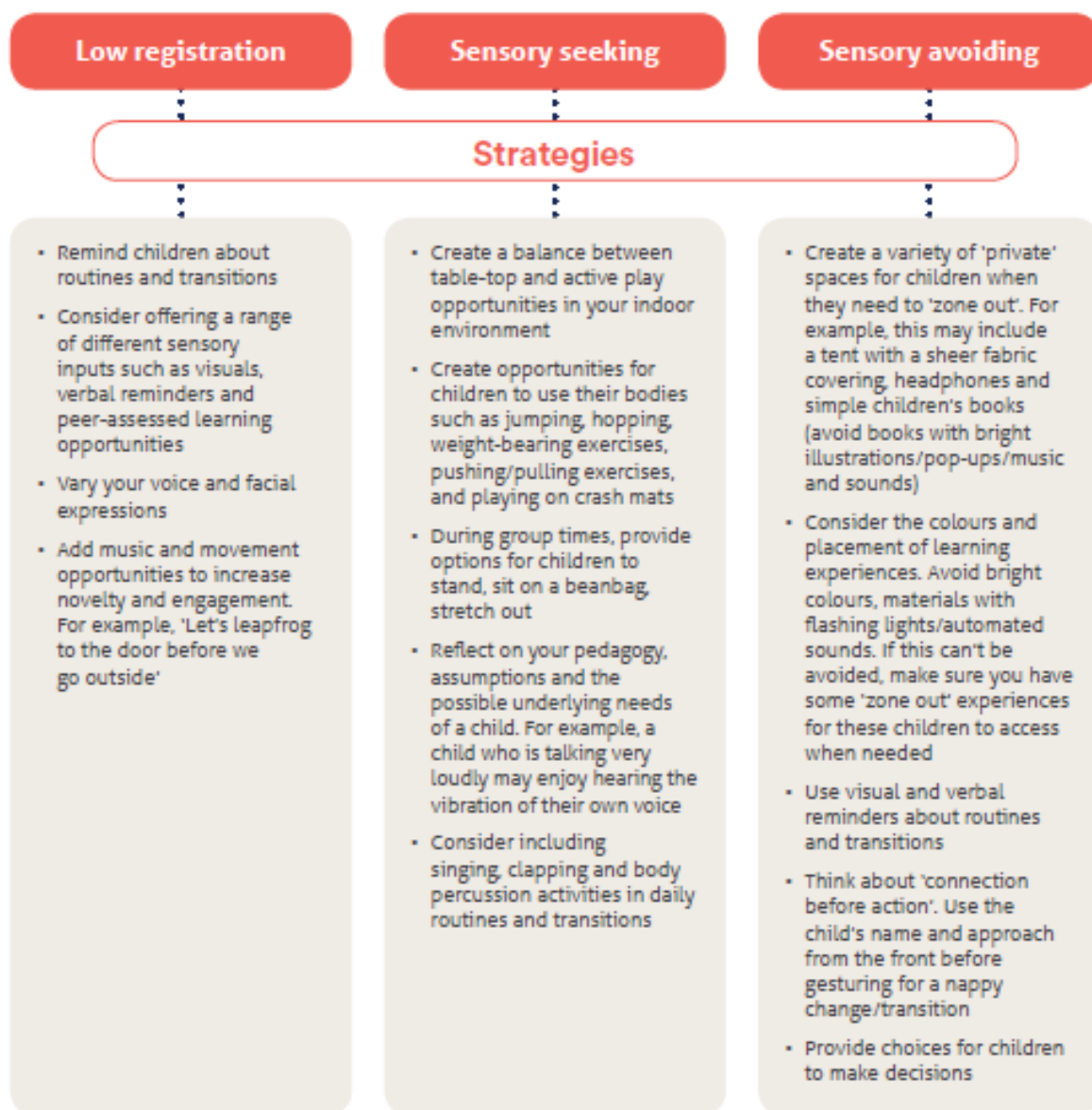


CULTURAL SAFETY AND AWARENESS

- ☐ Do you know about every child's language and culture? Not just the traditions of their culture, but the ones that are meaningful to their family?
- ☐ Do you have a relationship with your local multicultural services?
- ☐ Are all children's names spelt correctly on lists and displays – and do you, other staff and children pronounce them properly?
- ☐ Do you have a relationship with local Aboriginal services and does your setting include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives?
- ☐ Does your service calendar include important days of celebration and commemoration for all of the cultures in your setting and local community? Do you acknowledge and teach children about these events?

Strategies to support children's sensory processing needs

Sensory processing pattern



Obviously, a child's behaviour cannot always be explained by sensory processing and integration. A child who cannot help bumping into other children during a music and movement session might also be affected by poor sleep or emotional, physiological or other factors.

Your local Inclusion Professional can offer support to discuss sensory processing and how it may be impacting on your care environment and practice. Make sure you discuss your observations with the child – where appropriate – and with their families, who can often share great insight and expertise.

All the best in making sense of children's senses!

The key foundations to teaching self-regulation

Model > Educators should model the behaviour they wish to see in children, e.g., responding to challenges in a calm and collected manner.

Teach > Like a coach on a sports team, educators should first teach skills, and then create situations that allow children to practice and use them.

Problem-solve > Difficulty with problem-solving is often the reason for children's frustration or outbursts – educators can support children to solve their own problems by providing options and having children make choices and reflect on outcomes.

Co-regulation

Co-regulation means modelling and teaching skills and supporting children to solve problems, to lay the foundations for self-regulation.

Environment

Children need consistent routines, to connect with nature and time for practicing mindfulness and meditation in their everyday environment. This allows them to process their feelings and begin to regulate their own behaviour.

Routines > Consistent, predictable routines support children to feel secure. When children feel secure, they are more able to regulate their feelings and behaviour.

Connect with nature > Natural environments and outdoor play support behaviour management. Don't believe us? Click back to page 3 to find out more!

Mindfulness and meditation > Practicing mindfulness and meditation can help keep both educators and children calm. This helps educators be better co-regulators and supports children to begin to self-regulate.

Check-in > Regularly checking in with each other supports peer relationships and develops supportive teams.

Check-out > Ensure educators take regular breaks – educators need time away from children and the education and care environment to recharge.

Plan > Appropriate time for educators to plan their programs outside of time spent with the children enhances the relationships and wellbeing of both educators and children.

Educator self-care

Educators' wellbeing supports children's wellbeing. Educators who can properly check-in, check-out and plan have a greater capacity to support children to develop self-regulation skills.

Relationships

Self-regulation is deeply embedded in children's social relationships. Supporting children to name their emotions, using appropriate body language and having regular interactions with them will foster your educator-child relationships.

Emotions > Being aware of one's emotions with support from a trusted adult in a responsive and comfortable environment will promote self-regulation.

Interactions > Responding to children's cues and interacting with them regularly will support strong relationships between children and educators.

Body language > Using appropriate body language can do wonders for building positive relationships with children. Make eye contact, un-cross your arms and get on children's level.

Now, tick all that apply to your service! Use the blank space to jot down one more strategy you could use...

CO-REGULATION	To MODEL self-regulation, our educators:	☐ Behave as they would like children to behave	☐ Give clear instructions through the use of visuals
		☐ Set clear expectations through the use of schedules, procedures and an established routine	☐ Display and reinforce self-calming strategies
		☐	
	To support PROBLEM-SOLVING skills, our educators help children to:	☐ Clearly define problems	☐ Choose an option based on the positives and negatives and carry it out
		☐ Think of two options for resolving a problem, and write a positives and negatives list for each option	☐ Reflect on how successful the option was in addressing the problem
		☐	
	To support children with self-regulation, our educators TEACH:	☐ Age-appropriate rules and expectations	☐ Peer mediation skills
		☐ Social skills, and provide opportunities to practice them	
		☐	

EDUCATOR SELF-CARE	To support educators to CHECK-IN, our service has:	☐ A culture of team building and shared responsibility	☐ Time for check-ins with leaders as a regular part of an educator's week
		☐ An accessible Employee Assistance Program or equivalent, which is regularly referred to in educator meetings	
		☐	
	To support educators to CHECK-OUT, our service has:	☐ A dedicated outdoor space for educator breaks	☐ A practice of valuing breaks – breaks are not used for catching up on paperwork or discussing operational issues
		☐ A culture of discussing the mental and physical wellbeing of educators as an important part of service philosophy and pedagogy	
		☐	
	To allow for appropriate PLANNING, our service:	☐ Supports educators to develop an understanding of the importance of self-care	☐ Ensures educators' strengths and interests are reflected in their work with the children
		☐ Allows time for educators to plan their programs and relationship-enriching experiences with the children	
		☐	

ENVIRONMENT

ROUTINES at our service look like:	☐ Consistent and predictable environments	☐ Clear and accessible visuals that support children to understand the structure of their day, sequence of events and prepare children for transitions
	☐	
CONNECTING WITH NATURE at our service looks like:	☐ Regular opportunities to engage with natural environments through outdoor play	☐ Connecting with nature through natural materials like plants, water, sand, mud and more
	☐ Talking to children about what the natural environment makes them feel/hear/see/smell	
	☐	
MINDFULNESS/ MEDITATION techniques at our service look like:	<i>For educators:</i>	
	☐ Mindful breathing – breathe in for five seconds, hold the breath for five seconds, breathe out for five seconds, repeat	☐ Body scan – stand still, start from your toes and move up your body. As you reach each body part, think about how it feels in this moment
	☐ Mindful listening – focus on the sounds around you (birds, wind, rain...)	
	☐	
	<i>For children:</i>	
	☐ Breathing buddies – as part of daily routine, have children lie down with their toy of choice on their stomach and watch as the toy goes up and down as educators count their breaths	☐ Connect to country – ask children to think of an outdoor place they love. Ask, what does the place look like? What sounds can you hear? What does it smell like? How do you care for it?
	☐ Tucker Turtle Technique (bit.ly/3ror3sh)	
	☐	

RELATIONSHIPS

To support EMOTIONAL awareness, our educators:	☐ Support children to acknowledge and name their emotions	☐ Ensure emotional connections, like using facial expressions, are made with children
	☐ Provide a warm, responsive and nurturing environment	☐ Speak calmly and provide physical and emotional comfort during times of distress
	☐	
To utilise appropriate BODY LANGUAGE, our educators:	☐ Make eye contact with children	☐ Crouch down to get on children's level to appear as their equal
	☐	
Our educators allow children to have appropriate social INTERACTIONS by:	☐ Crouching down to get on children's level	☐ Always having educators on the mat or tables where children are playing
	☐ Being responsive to children's emotions and building trust in a nurturing environment	☐ Greeting each child and family in the morning in a warm and friendly manner
	☐	

First Nations dates of significance

There are many First Nations key days of significance you can recognise at your service throughout the year. Print this poster and display it in your staffroom as a reminder of what's coming up and when.

26th January

Survival/
Invasion Day

13th February

Anniversary of
National Apology

21st February

International Mother
Language Day

Third Thursday of March

National Close
the Gap Day

21st March

Harmony Day

26th May

National Sorry Day

27th May

1967 Referendum

27th May to 3rd June

National Reconciliation Week

3rd June

Mabo Day

1st July

Coming of the Light

First Sunday of July until the following Sunday

National NAIDOC Week

4th August

National Aboriginal
and Torres Strait
Islander Children's Day

9th August

International Day
of the World's
Indigenous People

**First Wednesday
of September**

Indigenous
Literacy Day

13th September

Anniversary of the United
Nations Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Original artwork by Gary Saunders,
Bangerang, Taungurung, Wiradjuri,
Yorta Yorta and Djarra man.
Used with permission.



yooralla

7 questions to spark gratitude in children

Gratitude is a powerful emotion that can greatly benefit a child's wellbeing and development. While we might be grateful for something or someone deep down, expressing it can have a huge positive impact!

Here are 7 simple questions to spark gratitude in children.

Can you tell me about something you're looking forward to this week?

What is one good thing that happened today?

Who in your life makes you smile your biggest smile?

What has made you laugh today?

What do you like to do with family on weekends?

Who would you like to say thank you to today?

Can you tell me about a friend who you have fun with?

Pop this poster up at your service to remind staff and families of the many ways they can spark children's gratitude each day.



One For All

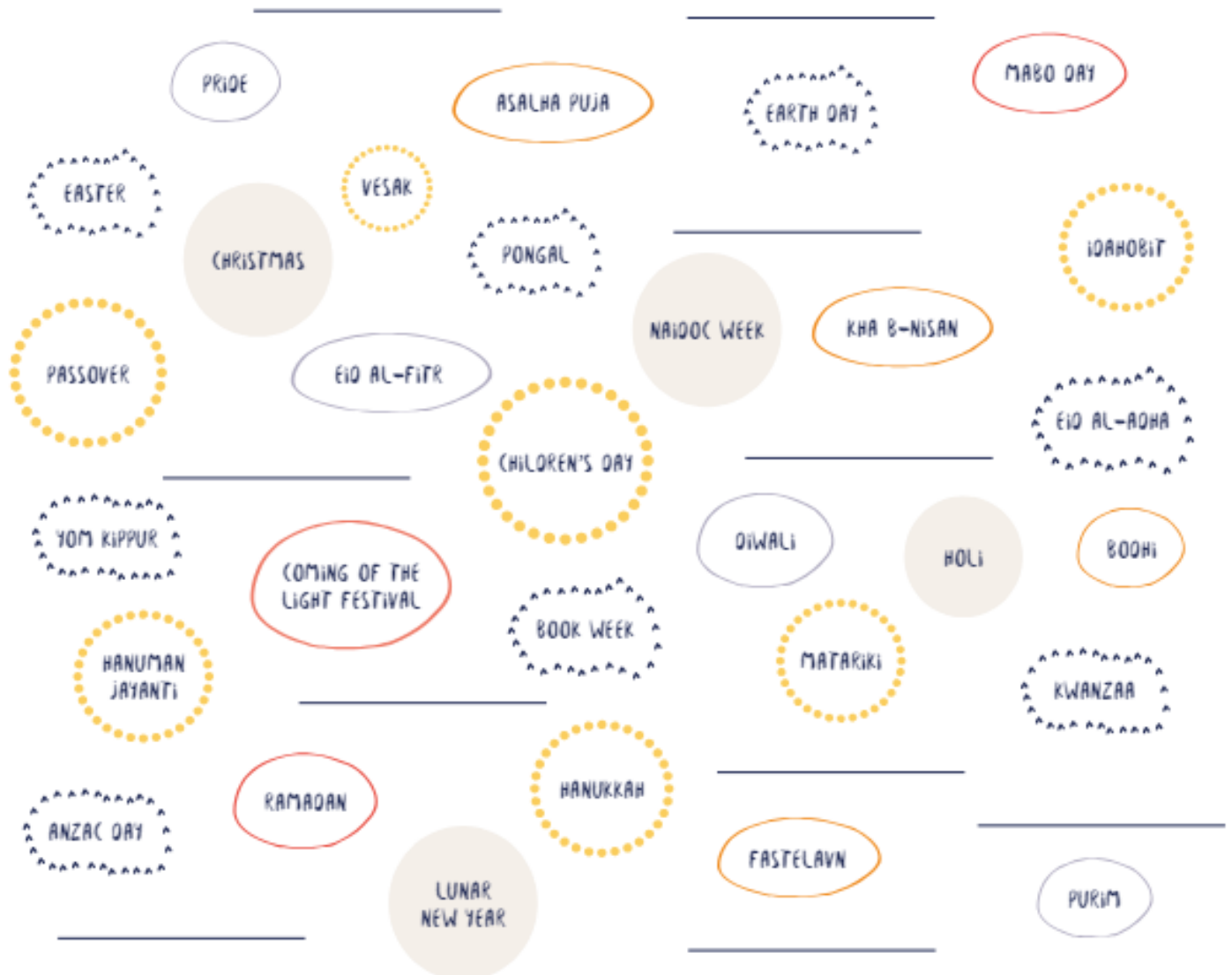


yooralla

What do we celebrate?

Use this space to acknowledge the special times of year for your community!

The suggestions below are just a guide. Don't forget to add ideas from your educators, children and families.





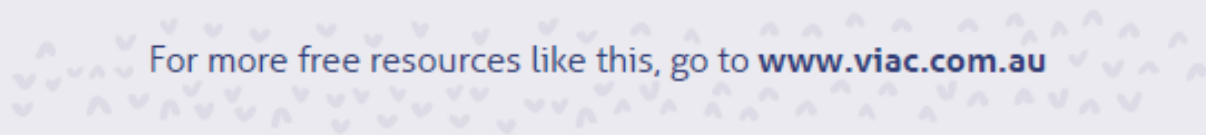
Checklist: How to build a sense of belonging for *all* children

Every child deserves to feel they belong – use this checklist to create a safe and welcoming environment at your early childhood or OSHC service.

- 
- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Do you greet every child by name as they arrive? | ☐ Is every child's voice counted in your program? |
| ☐ Does every child have their own locker and a place for their hat? | ☐ Is every child invited to share in the decision-making? |
| ☐ Are children's names spelt correctly on displays, lists, lockers? | ☐ Do you share information for families in languages that are accessible to them? |
| ☐ If your service has pigeonholes for communications, does every family have one? | ☐ Are your forms written in a way that is inclusive of diverse family situations? |
| ☐ Do you know the names of children's guardians? | ☐ Do you talk to families about their parenting styles to gain more information about how you can partner together to achieve the best for the child? |
| ☐ Do you know the names of other important people in each child's life? (siblings, other people who collect them) | ☐ Do you ensure that your social and community gatherings happen at a range of times and days to suit a variety of family members? |
| ☐ Do you know about every child's language and culture – not just the traditions of their culture, but the ones that are meaningful to their family? | ☐ Does your service reflect knowledge and history of your local community? |
| ☐ If you use a belonging tree, family photos or child sign-in station, is every child included? | ☐ Can you name 50 things about every child? |
| ☐ Does your program include images and resources that are culturally familiar for every child so they can feel connected? | |
| ☐ Does your setting include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives? | |
| ☐ Does your setting include positive representations of diverse cultures? | |

TAKE ACTION

Which ONE action do you want to focus on? What could you do tomorrow? Write it in the box now!



For more free resources like this, go to www.viac.com.au