Inclusion

Inclusion – it’s about access, participation and outcomes! Inclusive practice benefits all children in your care. This month, see a case study and some great resources to support your progress in this area.

Case study

Building a strong community – Millville

‘Children who grow up in communities possessing high levels of social capital are more likely to be exposed to helpful social networks or adults who provide positive resources, information and opportunities that may be educationally beneficial.’


Millville Child Care Centre has been part of the Colac community for over 20 years, and in 2017 it was awarded an Excellent National Quality Service (NQS) rating by ACECQA. A significant aspect of the service is the way it forges connections both internally and with the wider community. These connections provide children with a wide range of experiences and ensure that the needs of specific children and families are well supported.

Cathy Thompson has been part of the service from the beginning.

We work closely with Colac Area Health, Child First, and the Barwon Youth and Family service, which all provide support for vulnerable children. They reinforce our message that we are an accepting and flexible place where children and families will not be judged if circumstances are hard. It’s a genuine partnership – I’m happy to give presentations at classes they run for new parents; they sometimes use our community room for activities. It means that we are all on the same page, working in the same direction and the staff of both services share trust and confidence in each other.

Colac is a small town in rural Victoria. The 2016 Census data provides some insights into its demographics. Like many country towns, it is less ethnically and culturally diverse than large cities, but diversity is increasing. Refugees from Sudan arrived in numbers some years ago but have since moved on, following work in other parts of Victoria. Numbers of Chinese families now live in Colac, and 0.4 per cent of the population now speaks Mandarin.

Cathy reflects on changes in the service’s population over time, beginning with the arrival of the first Sudanese children fifteen years ago.
They were absolutely kids from another culture. I thought that we had to begin by learning more about what had happened to them as refugees. A few of us read Morris Gleitzman’s book *Boy Overboard*, which helped us understand some of the experiences that families might have gone through. Over time, we as a staff have had many discussions about the impact of culture on children’s behaviour, and about how to approach parent values. At one stage, the children didn’t want to sit at a table – so we were questioning whether it was a cultural thing or not. At present, some of our Chinese families don’t want their children to go outside – so that’s something for us to reflect on and negotiate.

Strategies that have enabled staff to develop their cultural competencies have been mostly experiential. Cathy says: ‘Staff members are committed to developing their own knowledge base. Some have been on cultural tours to explore our Indigenous identity. It’s a slow, gradual process’.

For many thousands of years clans of the Gulidjan people have occupied the region of Colac; Aboriginal people now form approximately 1.2% of the population. Deepening a focus on the cultures and experiences of Aboriginal peoples has been important within Millville Child Care Centre for some time.

At the last staff meeting we watched a bit of footage from the documentary about the footballer Adam Goodes and the racism he experienced. It’s important that we as adults are educated, and empathic, so we can work in informed ways with children. To go beyond being tokenistic. To try to understand what it’s like to be singled out or not to be in ‘the mainstream’. We have an Acknowledgement of Country. The children, 3- and 4-year-olds, can talk about what happened to Aboriginal people when white people settled around here. One group has recently created a gathering circle. We are trying different things.

There is evidence that communities with high levels of social capital – exemplified by strong social networks, feelings of trust and safety and community participation – afford children access to learning experiences and role models that contribute to positive academic outcomes. Related to social capital, sense of community has also been associated with success at school. Millville has built relationships within the local community – including the local secondary schools. The service hopes to create a bush tucker garden with the help of Year 9 students at a neighbouring school. Children also interact with the local aged care facility. This gives children opportunities to develop a repertoire of skills for engaging with another generation, to learn how to speak with people who are new to them.

The service has a strong commitment to early intervention and supporting children with disability to participate fully in programs. This can mean modifications to the environment. For example, the enrolment of a child who is deaf has meant adapting the physical environment with soft furnishings. Early intervention services have helped Millville’s educators work with a family to determine the best preschool options for a young boy with total blindness. Detailed transition plans have helped children with Down Syndrome to more easily move on to primary schooling.

To be effective in its support, Millville works closely with play therapists and physiotherapists, and organisations such as Vision Australia, Down Syndrome Australia and Deaf Children Australia.

A focus on inclusion is beneficial for individual children, the whole cohort and educators and other staff at the service. It enables all children to be more resilient, to be accepting of difference, to be equipped for a more globalised world – even in a small town like Colac.
Understanding inclusion

This fact sheet contains information on inclusion and exclusion, respect for diversity, partnerships, and high expectations and equity. Questions are offered for discussion and reflection.

**SOME IDEAS ON INCLUSION:**

*Take a moment to reflect on what inclusion means to you*

- Inclusion is about welcoming and celebrating diversity
- All children are capable and competent
- Educators collaborate with families to make children’s learning meaningful
- Educators work in partnership with children, their families, and support professionals
- Services, not children, have to be ready for inclusion
- Belonging in central to being (who children are) and becoming (who they can become)
- Inclusion is about belonging and participating fully in a diverse society
- Educators value children’s different abilities and respect differences in family background
- Creating an environment in which all children can participate and succeed
- Collaboration is the cornerstone of effective inclusive programs

The fact sheet includes a discussion of barriers to inclusion.

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<td>Inclusion detrimental to children without disability</td>
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<td>Expectations of families</td>
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**Inclusion of children with additional needs: Self-guided learning package**

This package will help you to consider and reflect on your ideas, beliefs and attitudes about diversity and inclusion. Topics include barriers to inclusion, family-centred practice and accessing additional support.

**Early Years Connect**

These information sheets here provide quick access to key facts and advice about inclusion, disability support, legislation and working with families and other professionals. While made for Queensland-based early years educators, they are of general relevance to a broader Australian context.
Rethinking images of inclusion:
A picture book for children’s services
This book poses questions that help us rethink how inclusion is understood and practised.

Professional discussion about inclusion
Access a professional discussion about inclusive practice on this video where experienced educators discuss how a Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) can link with the QIP and a Reconciliation Action Plan.

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No.38 2012: Curriculum decision-making for inclusive practice
This newsletter asks you to consider decisions and actions that support inclusion, such as curriculum that creates opportunities for all children and supportive physical environments.

Supporting the inclusion of marginalised families in early childhood education services
This presentation outlines research about factors that enable greater participation by families on the margins. It references Nancy Fraser’s theory of social justice and outlines five emerging themes from the research.

Inclusion of children and families with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Sue Larkey’s webpage includes tip sheets on why and how to use visuals, the use of sensory toys, schedules and timers, tips about managing behavior, and creating communication rich environments (amongst a host of other useful strategies).

NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency
This valuable website includes many links to practical resources and links to professional learning.

Inclusive practices for positive engagement: Case studies on challenging behaviour
This NSW-based compilation of case studies identifies common strategies used by educators to achieve the successful inclusion of children with challenging behaviours. It includes two case studies from Outside School Hours Care as well as early years settings.

Victorian Inclusion Agency
In this collection, find resources that support inclusion in areas such as disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and resources that promote positive behaviours in children. While designed for a Victorian setting, most resources are applicable to a broader Australian context.

Indigenous participation in early childhood education and care: Qualitative case studies
This 2016 report will give you some ideas about how your service can better welcome and sustain the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

So a child aged two and a half with spina bifida could play with dolls and prams alongside other children – without needing her walker and falling over trying to push a stroller – NSW-based educator Alicia Judge added four 1kg ankle weights to the twin stroller playset.

Image: Alicia Judge
**Professional learning**

Before you access some of the online learning modules mentioned below – take a look at this video – it should put a smile on your face: [Everyone needs a friend like #50](#)

**Disability Standards for Education for early childhood (prior to school)**

This free [online course](#) is designed to help you uphold your legal obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. These obligations focus on providing fair access to education for students with disability. You will need to register to complete the course.

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**Meet Johan**

Johan cannot engage with play-based learning because of a lack of sleep due to disruptions at home.

Does Johan have a disability?

- [No](#)
- [Yes](#)

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**Early Years Connect: Inclusion online modules**

These eight free [online modules](#) contain text, video, activities and assessments to help you learn more about inclusion. Find modules about creating a supportive learning environment, supporting children's behaviour, making educational adjustments, and five other practical topics. While they were made for Queensland-based early years educators, they are of general relevance to a broader Australian context.
Staff meeting activity

Use these Inclusion cards from the ACECQA Quest for Quality activity to tease out what you do well and what you might work on in the area of inclusion.

Here are just a few ideas from the huge number of resources designed to support inclusion.

- LEGO has launched braille bricks for children to learn braille.
- Picture story books can be a great way in for children. Try these sites for ideas:
  - Children's books that teach empathy
  - Picture books that promote diversity and inclusion
  - 10 books for kids about inclusion and acceptance
  - Eight Australian picture books that celebrate family diversity
  - Top 10 books to help make a difference

- A new resource, NCACL Cultural Diversity Database, includes books such as Archie and the Bear. You can search for books by key concepts like ‘cross-cultural relations’, ‘empathy’, ‘hope’, ‘immigrants’, ‘intolerance’ or ‘kindness’. All books have been linked to the EYLF outcomes.