Include by embracing diversity in your learning community

Inclusive practice for educators relates to creating opportunities for everyone in a learning community to be who they are and to achieve their best mental health.

As an educator, you play a key role in developing inclusive environments for children within your learning community. You can provide a safe place where diversity is acknowledged, respected and embraced, which contributes to strengthening the entire community.

Inclusion and diversity

Inclusion occurs when people feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents. It also supports empowerment for people to contribute their experiences, skills and perspectives to improve their environment for everyone.

If people feel invisible or experience bullying, harassment or discrimination, this can affect their sense of self-worth. It can also interfere with learning and may impact their mental health and wellbeing.

Diversity is about understanding and embracing different ways of thinking and being. Differences can include age, religion, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity and culture, education level, family arrangements and circumstances, personality, interests and abilities, mental health status, disabilities and physical attributes.

The importance of fostering inclusive environments

Learning communities are made up of children, young people, families and educators with their own strengths, needs and circumstances. Understanding this diversity of experience can support you and your colleagues to consider how you can create a welcoming and supportive experience for everyone.

Your learning community may include:

- rural and remote communities
- people impacted by trauma

- older people
- people impacted by eating disorders
- people with disability
- veterans
- people impacted by substance misuse
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- multicultural communities
- gender and sexually diverse people.

Educators should aim to provide children, young people, educators and families with a sense of belonging and connection within a safe environment (emotional, social and physical). This can motivate them to participate actively in learning experiences and the wider community.

How you can foster inclusive environments

This module explores the Universal Design for Learning principles and how to implement them in your early learning service or school. At its heart, inclusion is about encouraging everyone to participate.

By completing the Include module, you will be able to:

- appreciate the importance and benefits of supporting inclusion and diversity in your learning community
- understand inclusion and diversity and how these support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people
- use inclusive practices in your role as an educator
- feel confident using inclusive practices to foster mental health and wellbeing in your learning community.