

## TEAM APPROACH TO INCLUSION

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Program contributes to the provision of a quality kindergarten program. The KIS Program focuses on enhancing a kindergarten's capacity to provide a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability and ongoing high support needs in an inclusive kindergarten environment.

Inclusive programs provide for each child's interests and abilities, across all the learning and development outcomes identified in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). To effectively deliver a kindergarten program that is inclusive of all children, all staff must be involved. A team approach to inclusion is best practice to ensure that all children can access and actively engage in all aspects of the program.

### WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF A TEAM APPROACH TO INCLUSION?

Inclusive teams:

- include everyone working to support the child and family\*
- work together to deliver an inclusive program for all children that focuses on each child's abilities and interests
- demonstrate high expectations for all children in the program
- provide opportunities for all children to meaningfully participate in all aspects of the program
- have open and ongoing constructive communication between staff members, and with families and kindergarten management
- share information and express their ideas and are willing to learn from each other's varied expertise

- build relationships within the team and with families and children to develop a warmth and trust.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A TEAM APPROACH TO INCLUSION?

Benefits for children with a disability or developmental delay, and on-going high-support needs or complex medical needs

Knowledgeable and inclusive educators actively plan for the learning and development of the child supporting children to learn alongside their peers as a member of the community.

The child is supported to develop secure relationships, which encourages them to learn and actively participate in the group.

Warm and trusting relationships with staff allow the child to develop a strong sense of self, friendships with others in the group and a sense of belonging to the group and the broader community.

Benefits for all children in the program

An inclusive program benefits all children within a kindergarten. As children develop a more knowledgeable sense of self they learn to work collaboratively with others and offer care, empathy and respect.

A whole of team approach to inclusion also fosters an appreciation of diversity within the kindergarten environment and the broader community.

All children are supported to:

- recognise that disability is not the only element of diversity
- understand and respect other forms of diversity; including, differences in each other, their families and cultures
- develop an appreciation of similarities between each other as well as differences.

**Benefits for families**

A team approach to inclusion support families to:

- feel welcome and a part of the kindergarten and broader community
- develop meaningful relationships with all kindergarten staff and feel confident that every staff member understands their child’s interests, abilities and support needs
- to trust and value each other’s contributions, with each sharing insights and decision making around their child’s learning and development.

It is also important for families that their child feels a sense of belonging in the program, has developed friendships, and has the opportunity to engage in the full range of learning and development activities offered to all children in the program.

**Benefits for educators**

In taking a team approach to inclusion, educators:

- have the capacity to respond to the individual needs of all children in the kindergarten program
- develop meaningful relationships with all children informing their ability to respond to their individual interests, abilities and needs
- work in an environment where they feel respected and valued as a contributing member of the team.

**WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE TEAM LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?**

The kindergarten’s management team actively supports and promotes the kindergarten’s inclusive approach through philosophy, policies and procedures. These foundations support the kindergarten team to promote and implement inclusive practice in every day programming.

In an inclusive team, the early childhood teacher shows strong leadership and flexibility in the way they deliver the program. They ensure that each staff member understands their role and responsibilities in delivering an inclusive program.

Staff share the responsibility of care, learning and development of all children; allowing all children to develop warm relationships with all staff.

All staff have the opportunity to express their ideas and contribute to program planning through regular team meetings. Through this regular communication, staff feel respected, understand each other’s strengths and respond to other’s needs throughout the kindergarten sessions.

An inclusive environment is consistently welcoming to families and children, and there is a sense of organisation and coordination. To promote inclusion within the kindergarten group, educators make the most of naturally occurring opportunities to support social interaction and development of relationships between children.

Educators feel confident to respond to families’ queries and concerns; they talk continually with families about their children to ensure that the kindergarten has up-to-date information. They then use this information to plan more responsively for each child.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE KIS PROGRAM VISIT**

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/needs/Pages/kinderinclusion.asp>

\* In the context of this fact sheet, family may refer to biological, adoptive or step parents, siblings, grandparents or other extended family members, foster carers or other legal guardians of the child with a disability or developmental delay.