ABOUT
INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

An inclusive learning environment considers the physical, academic, behavioral and social aspects of learning for all learners. Setting up an inclusive learning area is an important element for successful learning outcomes. A learning environment that is set up intentionally will encourage engagement, routine, inclusion and positive behaviour. It will also help prevent or reduce academic and behavioural difficulties.

The learning environment should be an important consideration when planning learning. It can help or hinder the success of your learning design. Be willing to adjust the setup of the environment at different times for different learning opportunities or the intentions for the spaces.

What is an inclusive learning environment?

An inclusive learning environment is one where teachers have developed a repertoire of teaching, assessment and evaluation strategies to meet learners' diverse range of learning needs and strengths while considering the physical layout of the environment. Creating a learning environment to reinforce your expectations and routines is one that supports curriculum engagement. It is an important way to involve all learners and help them thrive emotionally, socially and academically.

Who can set up an inclusive learning environment?

- Teachers.
- Early Childhood Workers (ECWs) and School Services Officers (SSOs).
- Other educators who work with teachers in the learning environment.

Before you start

Consider the individual learners who need adjustments to the learning environment by:

- speaking with learners and their families
- getting support from other educators, your leadership, and your local Special Educator
- looking at previous successful environmental adjustments
- looking at reports from health professionals
- looking at other practice guides for environmental adjustments
- referring to any personalised learning plans for adjustments.

Remember to consider all learners, not just those with documented personalised learning plans.

CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

THERE ARE 4 ASPECTS TO CREATING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Physical

- Consider furniture and where the learner engagement will occur, with relevance to your teaching and their learning styles.
- Consider themed areas, desk and table areas, floor space, reading areas, regulation spaces, and pathways around the room.
- Keep the area easy to navigate by avoiding clutter.
- Make the room familiar and predictable.
- Minimise distractions – different learners might be affected by ambient noise, light, colours, objects, smells, temperature, and so on.
- Label containers so that learners can return items themselves.
- Use visual schedules for everyone and provide individual schedules to learners who need their own personalised versions.

Behavioural

- Plan for ways to support self-regulation including movement, time and space for breaks.
- Anticipate where a learner might have difficulty, for example at transition times, and create and explicitly teach routines that will support them.
- Explicitly teach group skills and expectations before expecting learners to collaborate on tasks.
- Use flexible furniture options like wobble stools to help with regulation.

Academic

- Think about the environment regularly, for example only display visuals that relate to the current lesson or learning.
- Have flexibility in the layout of other furniture to help with different kinds of learning, for example to allow small group work.
- Consider the interests and strengths of your learners and use these to engage them in the learning spaces.

Social

- Plan for safe learning environments that will build a strong sense of belonging by strategically grouping learners with shared interests and complementary strengths.
- Incorporate the learner's voice by asking what they want in their learning environment. This respects their input, validates their thinking, and can increase their engagement, motivation and ownership of the environment.
- Teach social skills like turn-taking, sharing ideas, and communicating effectively.