



# *fka*CS eNewsletter

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## TERM THREE

SEPTEMBER 2020

## Welcome to *fka* Children's Services (*fkaCS*) eNewsletter for Term 3, 2020!

Well, we got through it! Term three in Victoria during stage 3 and 4 lockdowns has really challenged our endurance. As we entered term three we thought we were heading back towards some familiarity but no sooner had we started warming up to business as (almost) usual we had to turn on our heels and head back to learning at home for most and limited on site education for a small percentage of Victoria's young children.

Talk about resilience. We're really practicing what we preach now. If we want children to learn to persist and develop resilience we need to role model it to the best of our ability and that's what early childhood educators across the state have been doing this term. Education has continued and evolved with the changing demands of the present moment. We've come to understand flexibility like never before and are learning how to find more in the tank well past the warning light!

Being an early childhood educator has always required a diverse skill set. We are a workforce made of educators, artists, philosophers, musicians, counsellors, actors, athletes, directors, academics, leaders, designers, scientists, explorers, gardeners, chefs and engineers just to name a few of the roles educators inhabit in their daily work in early childhood education and care. This pandemic has brought these skills to the fore in so many new ways with educators creating their own screen content drawing on the multiple skills of their teams, providing support and camaraderie to families isolating at home and doing it all with a compassion and humility shared by few other professions.

In this edition, we reflect on the meaning of inclusion and identity in our practice with children, families and each other. We hear a story of support and community from the sector and learn more about how to use the School Readiness Funding available to all State funded Kindergarten programs in Victoria for both three and four year old children.

There is also links to sector updates including *fkaCS* new website page for Learning at Home!

We hope this edition of the *fkaCS* eNewsletter provides some inspiration, reflection and ideas for supporting children and families engaging with your early childhood programs and services both now, during this challenging time of pandemic and lockdowns, and into the future.

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# Inclusion and Identity in Early Childhood Education

**The concept of ‘Inclusion’ in Early Childhood Education has too often been viewed something to ‘do’ or add to an early years program. However, if we focus our attention on the intent of inclusion rather than a categorisation of people to include, it is quite simply, the centre and foundation of any respectful relationship or effective educational practice.**

The definition provided in the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework (VEYLDF) highlights the intent of the term ‘inclusion’ in early years education and can be used to shape our actions and guide practice that is meaningful for all children.

*The intent is to ensure that all children’s rights and experiences are recognised and valued, and that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference. (DET 2016, p. 35)*

If we bring our attention to the rights of children, the recognition and value of who they are, (their identity) is clearly central to the practice inclusion. Identity is fluid and subjective to the individual. It cannot be defined from the outside but only acknowledged as “unique to each individual, and defines who people are, what shapes their interests and how they come to view the people and events around them” (DET 2016, p. 18).

The VEYLDF also describes inclusion as the “active response by early childhood professionals to understand all children’s and families’ experiences and children’s individual capabilities.” It goes on to say that it “is important to recognise and nurture each child’s sense of belonging to their family, community and early years settings” (DET 2016, p. 12) and that all “children have a

right to respectful treatment and the inclusion of their perspectives” (DET 2016, p. 10). Apart from important, and the basic right of all children, the inclusion, respect and recognition of children’s identities, is critical to their learning and development.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) has recently released a literature review and practice guide regarding the first of the five Learning and Development Outcomes of the VEYLDF, *Children have a strong sense of identity*. The Practice Guide addresses the four key components of the outcome (children’s sense of safety and security; autonomy and agency; sense of self; and respectful interaction with others) and acknowledges identity as defined in human rights law in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

The Identity Practice Guide offers the following model for understanding what identity looks like and how it develops in young children.

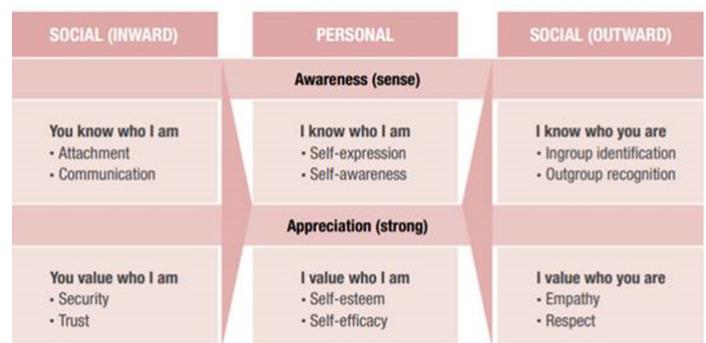


Figure 1: The components of a sense of identity

This model clearly identifies the impacts of others on the developing sense of self. The ‘personal’ column shows how a child sees themselves and is flanked by the ‘social’ columns that demonstrate the view of the child and the child’s view of others, as significant to the construction

of identity. The two components of 'Awareness' and 'Appreciation' are a direct reflection of outcome one of the VEYLDf requiring a 'strong sense' of identity for the outcome to be met. It breaks down the outcome into tangible, observable elements. For example, in relation to language, if a child hears their most familiar language in an environment they may sense that part of their identity is known and valued by others (social inward) in that environment. Even if they hear multiple languages other than their family language, they may more comfortably identify with others and respect multiple identities (social outward) more so than they would if they were in an environment that only reflected monolingual expression.

The social factors, both inward and outward, have a significant impact on the personal construction of identity. The child who senses a value of who they are is more likely to express themselves and have self-esteem and equally the child who has a sense of belonging to the group or recognises the value of the group they don't belong to, can develop self-awareness and respect for others.

This model can be applied to every child and as it "does not focus on attributes of identity (such as physical features, gender, ethnicity, personality or behaviour), it can support educators to recognise the components of identity and the constructs that help identity develop over time" (VCAA, 2020). In this model there is no 'other' to be 'included'. When we understand inclusion as recognising, respecting, valuing and responding to the identities of the children we support, planning for, and assessing learning and development, becomes meaningful and much more effective in leading to positive outcomes.

While language is only one facet of identity and should not be viewed as the entirety of a person's identity, another VCAA publication, *Supporting Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Language Learning in the Early Years* (VCAA, 2020) helps us to understand how language and cultural identity cannot be separated from a person's experience of identity. It highlights that in order for early childhood professionals to uphold, respect and support children's rights they must "recognise that languages are inextricably linked to children's identity, culture and heritage, as well as to their linguistic and cognitive development and academic success" (VCAA, 2020. p.8). The VEYLDf also acknowledges that the "acquisition and maintenance of first or home languages has a significant and continuing role in the construction of identity (VEYLDf, p. 18).

*Supporting Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Language Learning in the Early Years* (VCAA, 2020) encourages us to nurture a multilingual ecology. This model is based on the ecological model (adapted from Bronfenbrenner) that underpins the VEYLDf. It is structured in a way that moves us from the deficit othering discourse of children and families in need of 'inclusion' in the English/Western centric model of education, to an "approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment [that] moves beyond a monolingual mindset, and the practical separation and omission of children's languages and literacies from the curriculum, to integrate the identity, languages and cultural values of all families as the foundation and resource for learning" (VCAA 2020, p. 19). This document is also not about the 'inclusion' of identities rather it positions identity as the foundation from, and the means, through which we learn.

**Inclusion is essentially about knowing people and developing relationships based on respect where people feel secure and supported to be their evolving selves. To have the sense that what matters to me and my family is recognised and valued. It is not static, it cannot be 'done'. For learning and development to occur it needs to be a given, that if you are here, you are included, that each child is seen, appreciated and celebrated for all that makes them who they are, their identity right now and all they may wish to be.**

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#### References

- Department of Education and Training 2016, Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For All Children from Birth to Eight Years, Victorian Government, East Melbourne.
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2020, *Supporting Bilingualism, Multilingualism, and Language Learning in the Early Years*, Victorian Government, Melbourne.
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2020, *Identity Practice Guide*, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

# Spotlight on Practice

**Throughout 2020, fkaCS has been providing Cultural Inclusion support to several Hume City Council Services. As a part of their School Readiness Funding, they engaged fkaCS to design a coaching program specifically designed to meet the needs of their services. One of those services was Bluebird Way Preschool.**

The program provided Early Childhood Teachers the opportunity to engage in a self-paced online learning package that encouraged participants to increase their capacity in creating the foundations for a multilingual ecology within their individual programs.

Alex Saad, a Teacher at Hume City Council's Bluebird Way Preschool, implemented a project that focused on developing relationships with children and families. One of the most significant outcomes of this project was Alex's reflection on the notion of identity, what it is, what it looks like and how we share it with others. This reflection changed the way she thought about her goal and ultimately focused her thinking and action on how we can share identity through a common practice, environment and through our relationships.

## Alex's Journey

My name is Alex, I am currently an ECT team teacher from Hume City Council. I've been working alongside Ashley Howden from fkaCS through our School Readiness Funding.

Bluebird Way Preschool is a sessional kindergarten that delivers six funded four-year old programs. The staff, families and children who access our service come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and are families who live local within Roxburgh Park or surrounding suburbs under Hume City Council.

The team teacher role involves supporting and collaborating with an additional teacher in implementing programming and practice, delivering face to face learning to children for half of the sessions and supporting families and children within the room.

As a team teacher my initial goal was to develop ways in which I could develop relationships with children and connections with family. During face to face learning, I noticed that families enjoyed becoming involved in sharing food and recipes. Due to COVID-19, in program attendance dropped and remote learning began to take place. I wanted to develop ways in which I could remain connected with families and children and wanted to implement the sharing of favourite recipes remotely through our Preschool Online Page on Facebook.

With the support of Ashley listening to my ideas and encouraging me to put them in place, I developed the following goal:

*“Over the next 6 weeks I will implement a recipe sharing project to support children and families in sharing their individual cultural identities with our learning community. Children, Families and Colleagues will have an opportunity to share their favourite recipes which we will be re-created in the service. I will use ICT technology to share the recipes, children engaging in the cooking experiences and children’s and family comments about the food they are making and what they enjoyed.”*

Support from fkaCS has allowed me to achieve meaningful relationships with both families and children within the service. The support has been meaningful to me as I have developed connections with families, children, and staff and have developed confidence in my own self-identity.

The changes in practice and pedagogy that have occurred for me is coming to the realisation that a family or child’s ethnicity is not the only reflection of their identity, it’s part of a bigger picture where culture includes their relationship with experiences, people and places. This led me to reflect on my understanding of the Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner) and now, this model has more meaning to me.



Morning Tea  
a week ago · 593 views  
45



Cooking with Pooja  
4 weeks ago · 677 views  
32



Aziz is in the kitchen making Ful Mudamas  
6 days ago · 216 views  
You, Ismat Tunna and 13 others



Tabouli  
a week ago · 348 views  
24

Through editing videos in another language, an additional change in my practice is to ensure that I am embedding what I’ve called ‘a language of hands and eyes’ to my face to face practice which to me is reflecting on ways in which we deliver what we are communicating to others, and the importance of utilising a variety of visible and verbal cues.

I have also learnt to place myself as the ‘learner and listener’ as opposed to being ‘the teacher.’ This has allowed families, children and staff to be the knowledgeable people on their own self identities.

Overall, with the support of Ashley from fkaCS, this project has brought me closer to families, children and staff members within the service and I cannot thank her enough for her ideas, engaging conversations and for challenging me in my own thinking.

### A Reflection from Ashley (fkaCS Consultant)

A standout change in Alex’s practice was evident in her new perception and understanding of identity and culture. Moving away from the notion of language, ethnicity, religion and gender being a person’s entire identity to an understanding that culture and identity have many influences and it is within life experiences that our identity is developed, moulded and nurtured. Alex is also thinking about how a multilingual ecology works, what is needed and how identity is valued and nurtured.

The videos Alex recorded and uploaded have been in a number of different languages, so even in the online learning at home space Alex has been able to continue demonstrating to families and children, the value she places in the identity of others, celebrating communication, sharing and being active members of the community. As you can see from the amount of views the videos have received, they have been a welcomed, inviting and engaging addition to the learning at home program and has fostered connections between Alex, her colleagues, children and families across Hume City Council’s Early Years Services.

The key to the success of this practice for Alex was, as she says, placing herself as the ‘learner and listener’ in the experience and respecting peoples individual expressions of identity, rather than her preconceived expectations of how their identities would be expressed.



# School Readiness Funding 2021

**In 2021, all Victorian kindergartens settings, including funded kindergartens in long day care, will receive School Readiness Funding (SRF). The amount of School Readiness Funding each service will receive is based on the level of need of the cohort of children at the service.**

Services are required to spend most of their SRF on items from the [menu of evidence-informed programs and supports](#)<sup>1</sup>. Items on the menu align with the three priority areas for SRF:

- communication (language development)
- wellbeing (social and emotional) and;
- access and inclusion.

The menu includes information on a range of programs and supports that have been externally validated for how well they support children's learning and development.

➤ [Find out how to use this menu and guidance for kindergarten services to spend school readiness funding](#)<sup>2</sup>

The flexibility of the SRF program enables *fkCS* Pedagogy and Practice Consultants to co-design a tailored, individual program of work for each Kindergarten based on their identified needs.

The staged community restrictions as the result of the pandemic has resulted in new and flexible ways of delivering support including:

- The development of online communities of practice via our new online learning space
- [Learning at home](#)<sup>3</sup> resources for educators and translated material for families

- Cultural inclusion audits, goal setting and facilitated conversations
- Orientation and transition support
- [Webinars](#)<sup>4</sup> and online learning sessions
- Online coaching and mentoring

There have been many highlights in the first two years of the SRF program, including increased support to Kindergartens, access to resources and opportunities to network with other services and early childhood professionals.

Below is a reminder of the learning from the first two years to support you in planning for your SRF allocation.

#### 1. Plan early

- Contact your preferred suppliers early to schedule your support across the year.

#### 2. Think creatively

- What are you hoping to achieve?
- Think about how you might use your local solutions funds flexibly outside of the menu to meet the priorities of the program.

#### 3. Think about opportunities to network with other services and early childhood professionals

- Can you pool funds with other kindergartens to develop communities of practice across regions?
- Use your local connection with community groups and schools.

#### 4. Build a relationship with suppliers

- You may be able to negotiate with the supplier to co-design the program of work to ensure it meets the outcomes you are hoping to achieve.

#### 5. Think about how you will manage momentum and expectations with your team across the year

- Have you allowed enough time to implement your plan?
- Have you allocated enough backfill to enact your plan?
- Think about choosing one or two priorities to focus on for the year.
- Remember the funds are ongoing it may be worth concentrating on one area of practice and build up slowly.

#### 6. Think about how you will translate your learnings into practice

- Think about choosing one or two professional learning or training sessions and build mentoring and support around them in order to sustain learning and build capacity across your team.

#### 7. Take time to review your plan throughout the year

- Have new priorities emerged?
- Is the supplier delivering the support you need?
- Is another supplier more appropriate?
- Have you allocated enough time?

#### 8. Take a long-term approach

- What will support you to build on the learnings from previous years?
- What support will help you stretch your goals?
- Do you need to develop a new goal this year?

#### 9. Work closely with your local DET branch

**fkaCS can support you and your service to enhance the communication (language development), wellbeing (social and emotional), access and inclusion of all children in your early learning community.**

If you would like to discuss your plan with our consultants please call 03 9428 4471 or email us at [culturalinclusion@fka.org.au](mailto:culturalinclusion@fka.org.au).

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Printing this eNewsletter? Links from this article are listed below:

1. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/SRFmenu.aspx>
2. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/srf.aspx#link76>
3. <https://fka.org.au/resources/learning-at-home>
4. <https://vimeo.com/453481224/2466561524>

# Sector Updates

## NEW! fkaCS Learning at Home Webpage is Live!

We are very excited to provide this dedicated section of our website to Learning at Home. You will find fantastic resources for educators and translated information to support all of your families as they engage in learning at home.

In case you missed out, there is also a link to our recent webinar, *Learning at Home: Staying Connected with Multilingual Families*.

> Go to <https://fka.org.au/resources/learning-at-home>

## fkaCS Membership Extension

Due to restrictions in Victoria throughout 2020, we are aware that some of our members may not have been able to exercise the full capacity of their membership with fkaCS.

**Taking this into consideration, we have decided to extend our current memberships until the end of Term 2 2021.**

Members do not need to do anything to be eligible for this extension, it will occur for all fkaCS members automatically.

## Thrive by Five Initiative

The Minderoo Foundation recently launched its 'Thrive by Five' campaign which advocates for effective policy and investment in early childhood outcomes across Australia.

> Visit [www.minderoo.org/thrive-by-five/](http://www.minderoo.org/thrive-by-five/) to find out more

## Roadmap to Reopening Victoria

The Victorian Government announced its [roadmap to reopening Victoria](#) on Sunday 6 September. It details the potential easing of restrictions in place throughout Victoria in line with the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

### Important dates for Early Childhood Education and Care Services

#### Sunday 13 September to Sunday 27 September 2020

Metropolitan Melbourne:

- ECEC services continue to operate under the first step of the metropolitan Melbourne roadmap, remaining open for children of permitted workers (under the permitted worker permit scheme) and vulnerable children only.

Rural and regional Victoria:

- ECEC services continue to operate under the second step of the regional roadmap, with appropriate risk-mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to close).
- Services should continue to encourage all families (except those with health risks) to attend on-site, to best support children's learning and development.

#### From Monday 28 September 2020

Metropolitan Melbourne:

- ECEC services, including long day care and family day care, with a COVIDSafe Plan should open on-site for all children, with appropriate risk mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by DHHS to close).
- Permitted Worker Permits to enable on-site attendance are no longer required.

Rural and regional Victoria:

- ECEC services, including long day care and family day care, with a COVIDSafe Plan remain open for all children to attend on-site, with appropriate risk mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by DHHS to close).

#### From Monday 5 October 2020 (start of Term 4)

Metropolitan Melbourne and rural and regional Victoria:

- Sessional kindergarten programs are to be open for all children's attendance on-site, with appropriate risk mitigation measures in place (unless instructed by DHHS to close). Children can continue to attend more than one ECEC service, such as a sessional kindergarten program and a long day care service.

Please visit [education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au) for the latest information.

## Nominations Open: Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2020

These annual awards recognise people and organisations that strengthen multiculturalism and support Victorians of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There is an Early Childhood Education sub-category of the Education Award. The Education Award recognises schools, early childhood services and not-for-profit organisations that deliver outstanding learning and teaching programs and practice that enhances the social inclusion, wellbeing and education outcomes for Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Early childhood services, schools, vocational education and training services and not-for-profit organisations that use innovative and collaborative approaches to improve outcomes for Victorians from CALD communities and celebrate cultural diversity are encouraged to nominate. Self-nominations from organisations are accepted.

Award recipients will be honoured during an online ceremony hosted by the Victorian Multicultural Commission later in the year.

➤ For more information about the awards, eligibility or to submit a nomination, visit:  
[multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/multicultural-awards-for-excellence](http://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/multicultural-awards-for-excellence)

### fkaCS Continues Support

fkaCS staff are still available via phone or email during restrictions to support you in the transition back to onsite ECEC programs. Our staff are working remotely and are available to support your service. Contact us on 03 9428 4471 or email [culturalinclusion@fka.org.au](mailto:culturalinclusion@fka.org.au) to discuss how we can support you during this time.

#### Utilising the Multicultural Resource Centre Remotely

To ensure the safety of our staff and clients, the fkaCS Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC) is closed to the public until further notice. However, you can still utilise our popular service remotely, in a variety of ways.

For any questions or concerns regarding borrowing or returning items from the MRC, email [library@fka.org.au](mailto:library@fka.org.au).

#### Borrowing Resources

Send a Request via the Online Catalogue:

1. Visit <https://library.fka.com.au/> and log in with your Username (Membership ID) & Password
2. Search for items in one of two ways:
  - Entering key words in the search bar
  - Using the Advanced Search button to filter by item types, collections or languages
3. Add items to your cart by clicking the *Add to your cart* button under each item
4. Review cart (top left of screen) – a new window will open
5. Send cart – a new window will open
6. Enter [library@fka.org.au](mailto:library@fka.org.au) as the recipient and click Send

Complete our Resource Request Form:

1. Visit <https://library.fka.com.au/>
2. Scroll down to **Useful Links** and select *MRC Order Form*
3. Complete the form and email it to [library@fka.org.au](mailto:library@fka.org.au)

#### Returning Resources

Via Post:

- Simply go to your local Post Office to arrange return of your resources by post.

Contact-less Drop-Off:

- Please phone to book a drop-off time/date before returning resources.

#### Outreach Program

Borrowing:

- When you want a parcel, email the *Outreach Program Resource Request Form* (provided in your membership confirmation email), or email [library@fka.org.au](mailto:library@fka.org.au) to request a form.

Outreach Program Returns

- Continue to return your parcels as per original arrangements with postage paid returns.



**fka Children's Services Inc.**  
**18 Harper Street, Abbotsford VIC 3067**  
**03 9428 4471 | [fkacs@fka.org.au](mailto:fkacs@fka.org.au)**  
**[www.fka.org.au](http://www.fka.org.au)**