

Supporting In-Service Educators to Deliver Inclusive Education

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Topic Outline

Background

- Learning for Life Autism Centre – Evidence Based Practice
- Inclusive Education
- Policy to Practice Gap in Inclusive Education
- How to achieve inclusion in practice

Inclusion Works Program

Qualitative Article

- Change in educator classroom practices

Qualitative Article

- Educator and student outcomes
- Barriers to delivering inclusion

Next Steps



Evidence Based Practice



5 Steps for Evidence Based Practice

There are five EBP steps:

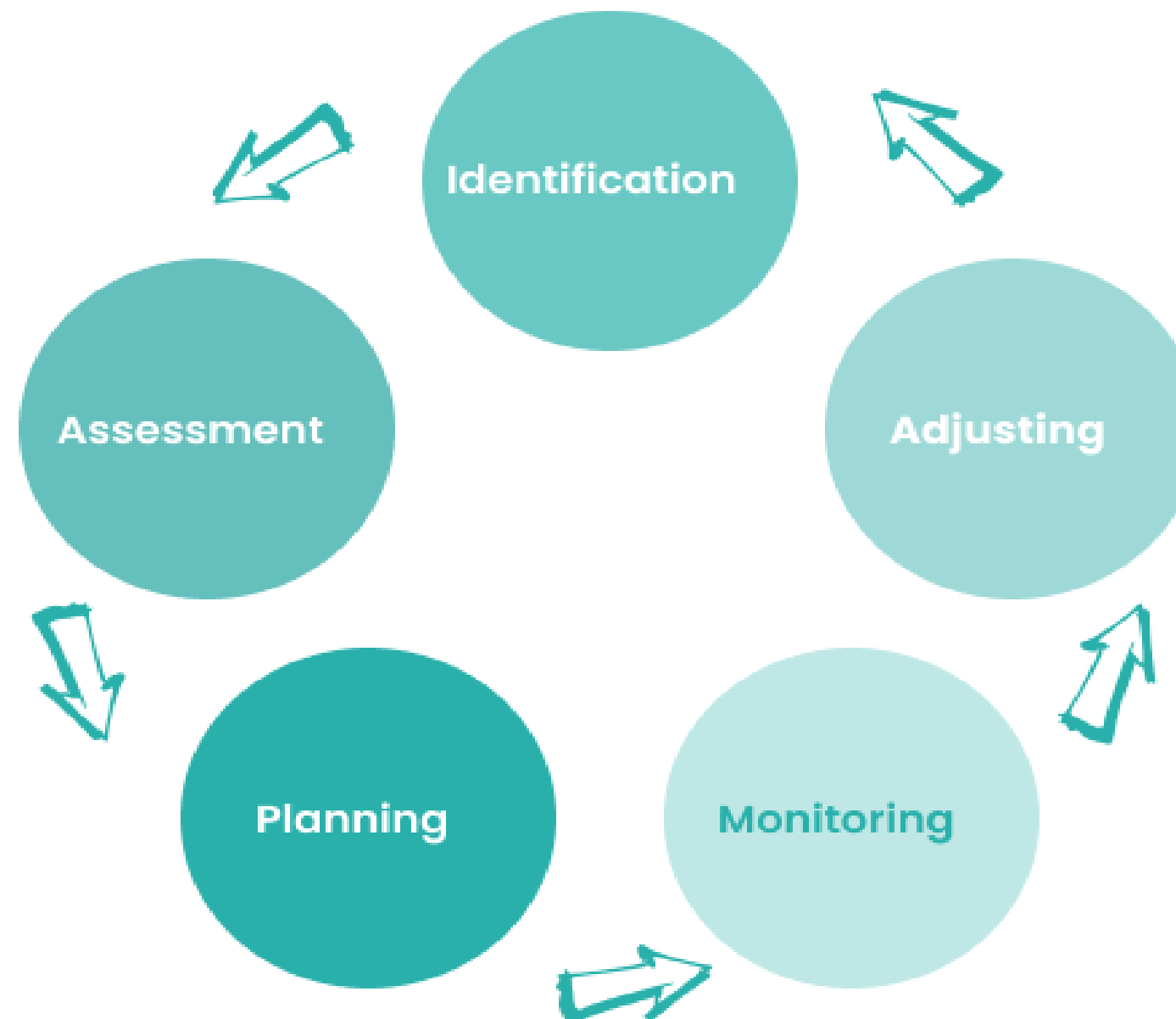
Identification: Identify the problem.

Assessment: Assess it to determine its magnitude and severity.

Planning: Design and carry out programs or interventions.

Monitoring: Determine its effectiveness to ensure its proper work.

Adjusting: This step is required if it is ineffective or the problem is more severe.



Definition: Inclusive Education

Inclusion is an active and iterative process whereby **all children** are included in terms of presence, participation and achievement (Ainscow et al. 2006).

Inclusion means:

- All students attending their local school
 - Students not being denied access based on their needs
 - Representative balance of students with and without additional support needs
 - Same aged peers grouped together
 - Individualised supports are provided
 - All students have the same opportunities
- (Giangreco et al. 2010)

Policy to Practice Gap

The translation of inclusive education policies into action has been difficult (Jenkin, Spivakovsky, Joseph & Smith, 2018)

- In relation to students with disabilities, failures to:
 - Adjust teaching methods and learning materials,
 - Use student support group meetings adequately,
 - Design appropriate individual learning plans are often reported(Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2012).

Achieving Inclusion in Practice

Inclusion requires teachers to use inclusive education practices to support all students (Finkelstein et al. 2019)

but

- Teachers feel their pre-service training did not adequately equip them to implement evidence-based classroom strategies in relation to behaviour management (Fox et al. 2022).
- Serry et al. (2022) found that although teachers can identify some evidence-based strategies, they often feel these strategies are not feasible to implement in their classrooms.

A Scoping Review

Purpose	To analyse and synthesise the extant published literature in the area of teacher in-service professional development in inclusive education.
Research Questions	1. What are the components of IPD for IE delivered to teachers working in mainstream primary school settings? 2. What specific content or skills have been included in IPD for IE? 3. What outcomes for teachers and students have been measured following the provision of IPD for IE, and how have these outcomes been measured? 4. What specific components of IPD may have contributed to positive outcomes for teachers and students?

Key search terms

Teacher or educator

Primary School or Elementary School

Inclusive Education

Training or Professional Development or Coaching

Databases

PsychINFO

ProQuest Education Journals

ERIC

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria



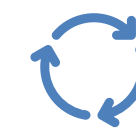
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Peer-reviewed studies and English language



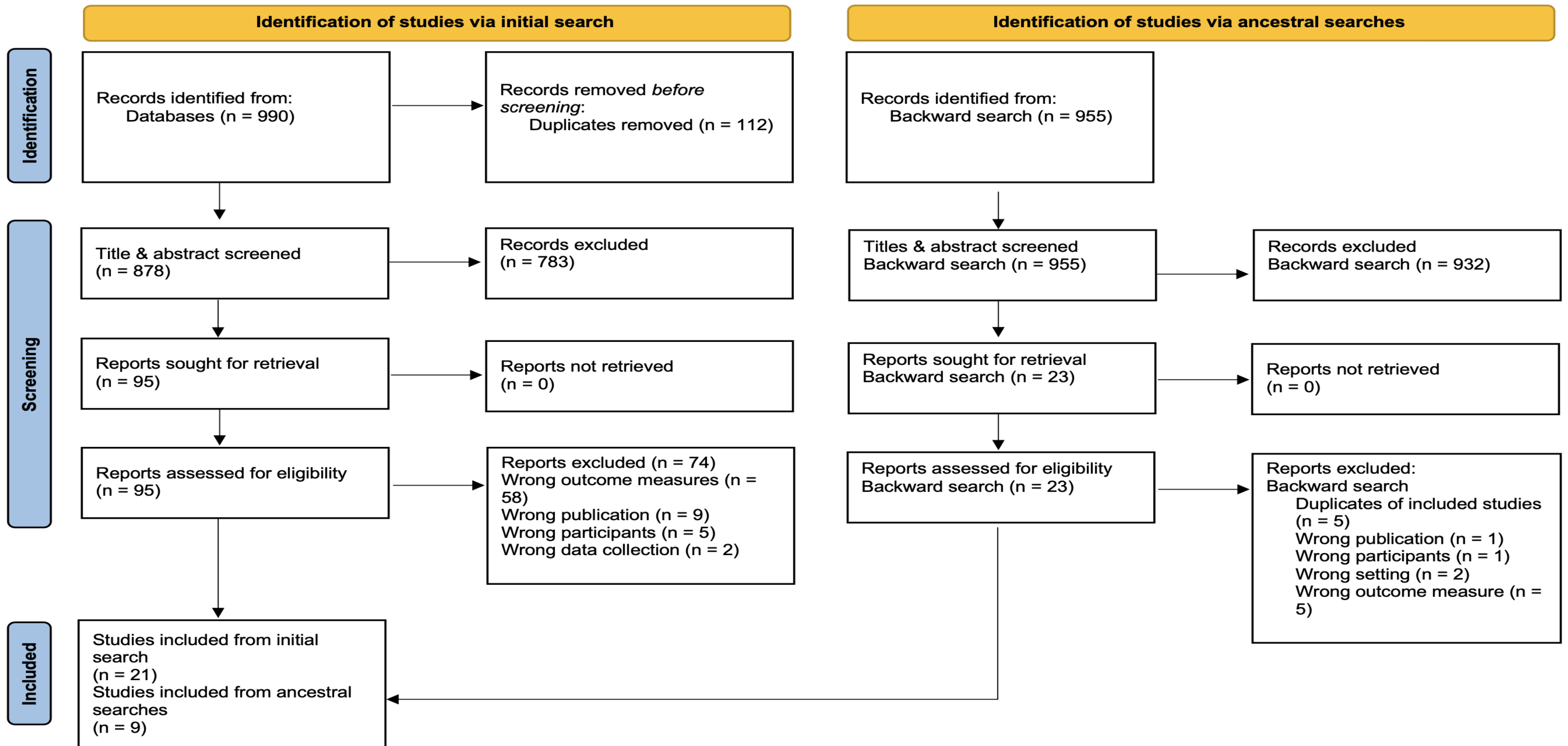
Evaluated changes in attitudes, knowledge, and/or practice related to IE following the provision of IPD,



Used a quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test, or single case research design



Participants were teachers, school leaders, and/or education support staff working in mainstream primary schools



Key Findings

The four important elements of in-service professional development for Inclusion

1. Little and Often
2. Active and Passive
 - a) Workshops
 - b) Coaching
 - c) Feedback
 - d) Application
3. Strong foundation with additional specific skill development
4. Adaption is vital

(Wood, et al. 2025)

The Inclusion Works® Program

A whole-school, year-long, multi-component, in-service educator professional development program



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Key Components

1. Little and Often – Weekly for a year (32 days)
2. Active and Passive
 - a) In classroom support – coaching followed by verbal & written feedback
 - b) Regular meetings with leadership
 - c) 3 Workshops (start, middle and end)
3. Strong foundation (workshops) with additional specific skill development across 27 inclusion practices (in-classroom support)
4. Data systems that allow adaption

Components of the IW Program



Tier 3

- Classroom coaching, verbal & written feedback (60min weekly)

Tier 2

- Classroom coaching, verbal & written feedback (30min fortnightly)
- One student per class

Tier 1

- Leadership meetings
- 3 workshops

The 27 Inclusive Education Practices

Class Wide Practices	Individual Student Practices	Plans
1. Differentiating group instructions 2. Emotion regulation visual supports 3. Environmental modifications 4. First-then 5. General positive reinforcement 6. General task analysis 7. General transitional supports 8. General visual supports 9. Group token economy 10. Instructional Control 11. Opportunities to respond 12. Prompting 13. Reactive Strategies 14. Teaching Social Skills 15. Visual schedules	1. Break systems 2. Check in/Check out 3. Differentiating instructions for individual students 4. Differentiating output for individual students 5. Increasing functional communication 6. Individual task analysis 7. Individual token economy 8. Individual transitional supports 9. Individual visual supports 10. Self-monitoring	1. Behaviour support plans 2. Individual education plans

Data Collection

Educator Practice Change

Start of Every Term

- Classroom Management Observation Tool (CMOT)
- ### Every Coaching Session
- Fidelity checklists

Student Engagement

Start of Every Term

- Individual student on-task data

Educator Experience

Start, Middle & End

- Attitude to Inclusion Scale
 - Intention to Teach Inclusively Scale
- ### End program
- Focus Groups

Evaluation of the Inclusion Works® Program

Six schools between 2022 and 2024



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Quantitative Study

Research Question	Does teacher use of the four inclusive teaching practices increase throughout the delivery of the IW program?
Data Collection	Classroom Management Observation Tool (CMOT) (Simonsen et al., 2020). Active Supervision The educator effectively moved, scanned and interacted with the students throughout the observation. Opportunities To Respond All students were provided with opportunities to respond and participate during instruction periods. Specific Praise Appropriate academic and social behaviour was acknowledged with specific praise. Frequent Acknowledgement Appropriate behaviour was acknowledged more than inappropriate behaviours.
Participants	30 Teachers & Education Support Staff
Time points	Start of every term

Participant Characteristics

Baseline Characteristics	Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3		Full Sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Gender								
Female	13	87	15	75	9	75	37	79
Male	2	13	5	25	3	25	10	21
Age (Years)								
≤40	4	27	13	65	7	58	24	51
41-50	8	53	6	30	4	33	18	38
≥51	3	20	1	5	1	8	5	11
Years teaching								
≤10	6	43	14	74	7	58	27	60
11≤20	4	29	4	21	4	33	12	27
21≤30	4	29	1	5	0	0	5	11
31≤40	0	0	0	0	1	8	1	2
Role								
Classroom Teacher	7	45	12	60	12	100	31	65
Education Support	4	25	4	20	0	0	8	17
Specialist Teacher	1	5	4	20	0	0	5	10
Leadership	4	25	0	0	0	0	4	8

Results

Interrater Reliability collected for 78% of CMOT observations. Mean IRR was 81% (range 70-96%)

All statistical analysis were significant (Wood, et al. 2026)

	Friedman Test	Post-hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank tests
Active Supervision	$\chi^2(3) = 11.46, p = .009$	Time 1 (M = 2.97) to Time 4 (M = 3.55) ($z = -3.231, p = .001$) with a medium effect size ($r = .42$)
Opportunities to Respond	$\chi^2(3) = 15.62, p = .001$	- Time 1 (M = 2.79) to Time 4 (M = 3.50) ($z = -3.346, p < .001$) with a medium effect size ($r = .45$) - Time 2 (M = 3.18) to Time 4 (M = 3.50) ($z = -2.714, p = .007$) with a medium effect size ($r = .36$).
Specific Praise	$\chi^2(3) = 16.13, p = .001$	- Time 1 (M = 2.10) to Time 4 (M = 2.86) ($z = -3.133, p = .002$) with a medium effect size ($r = .41$) - Time 1 to Time 3 (M = 2.79) ($z = -2.708, p = .007$) with a medium effect size ($r = .36$)
Frequent Acknowledgement	$\chi^2(3) = 9.29, p = .026$	Time 1 (M = 2.00) to Time 4 (M = 2.79) ($z = -2.786, p = .005$) with a medium effect size ($r = .31$)

Qualitative Study

Inductive Thematic Analysis

Research Question	1. Do the teachers perceive the use of the inclusive teaching practices to be effective for improving student behaviour and engagement in the classroom? 2. Do teachers experience any challenges or barriers when using the inclusive teaching practices in their classroom?
Data Collection	Focus Groups (8 with 3-8 participants) 1. Have any practices been easier or harder than others to implement? 2. Do you think the practices were effective for students? 3. Do you think the students liked the practices? 4. What are the barriers to implementing the practices?
Participants	38 educators - classroom teachers (N = 23), specialist teachers (N = 4), education support (ES) staff (N = 10) and one principal
Time points	End of the IW program

Overall Outcomes

Theme	Description
Simple Strategies, Meaningful Outcomes	Easy and effective for whole class and individual students
Enhancing Student Engagement, Agency and Belonging	Students engaged with the inclusive education practices at both class-wide and individual levels, enjoying the practices and demonstrating agency.
Enhancing Educator Capacity for Inclusion	Educators developed greater awareness of their beliefs, classroom practices, and student needs, supporting more effective implementation of inclusive education practices.
Making Inclusion Part of Everyday Practice	Educators successfully applied inclusive educators practices across students and classrooms.

Overall Outcomes Quotes

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Simple Strategies, Meaningful Outcomes	“Those whole classroom strategies were an effective and quick way to help those students... manage their own behaviours and become more aware of themselves...” “They were effective and were easy to implement.” “...some strategies were easy and quick and kind of just happen naturally.” “It actually really benefitted them as well.”
Enhancing Student Engagement, Agency and Belonging	“..we got into such a good habit, where he just knew the visual schedule without even displaying it.” “the kids got to sit down and chat about potential rewards that they would like to do... Which was really great, it helped with their routines.” “...they didn’t feel like they were singled out.”
Enhancing Educator Capacity for Inclusion	“I think being put in their shoes, that was good” “It opened my eyes a bit, behaviours not just the naughty kid, there are specific reasons to why I am getting this reaction... So that was helpful.” “...just bringing awareness to our actions and the way we do things was really powerful.” “a program like this has been phenomenal, for starting to think about different ways of supporting and supporting with different strategies”
Making Inclusion Part of Everyday Practice	“We have taken stuff that we might not use for that person but to use with someone else, another student...” “...I think it’s had bigger...reaches in the school. And some like real positive things have come from it” “...heading into this new year... you can enter the new year with those whole class lessons, whole class strategies. Now you’re more prepared”.

Ongoing Barriers

Theme	Description
Barriers Beyond the Classroom	Barriers arising from school policies, structures, or broader institutional factors that cannot be addressed by individual educators alone.
The Human Side of Implementation	Internal factors affecting participants, included self-doubt, overwhelm, and competing demands.
When Life Gets in the Way	External factors affecting student engagement, such as family circumstances or prior experiences of trauma.

Ongoing Barrier Quotes

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Barriers Beyond the Classroom	"I have been in the classroom for 9-10 years now. But I would say, the last 2 years have been the most challenging in terms of social and emotional needs." "...we have so many strategies that we use. But we don't do much knowledge sharing...we don't get to learn from each other as much as I think it could be helpful." "...it's really difficult to feel like you're meeting all their needs."
The Human Side of Implementation	"I don't think hard, I just think remembering to use {the practices}" "...everything else they had to do...was just overwhelming"
When Life Gets in the Way	"There home life is just so chaotic and there is just so much trauma". "...they have already had an entire day in a morning, and they are already stressed and are already done for the day. And then they get dropped at school." "Building those connections with the families...It can be challenging to get those conversations happening with families."

Program Component Benefits

Theme	Description
More Than the Sum of Its Parts	Participants perceived the multiple components of the IW program as individually valuable and mutually reinforcing, with each component contributing to a coherent and supportive learning experience.
How Change Happened	Participants identified specific mechanisms underpinning the effectiveness of the program, including sustained duration, regular observation and feedback, collaborative problem-solving, reduced cognitive load, and opportunities for iterative refinement of practice.
The Power of the Coaching Relationship	Participants highlighted the consultant's interpersonal and practical capabilities as central to building trust, fostering professional confidence, and supporting meaningful changes in practice.

Program Component Benefits:

Quotes

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
More Than the Sum of Its Parts	“...hands on. A nice balance of theory and doing it yourself.” “...feedback, talking to her afterwards...just getting some reassurance that you’re actually doing a good job.” “...fidelity checklists...supported what she {consultant} was saying.” “...all aspects...supported each other. Nothing seemed a waste of time.”
How Change Happened	“...if something wasn’t working, having her observe us weekly and then change it almost immediately or refocus the strategy or help us work out where we needed to change to implement the strategy more effectively was really great.” “I wasn’t having to second guess anything because ... I had it written down, so I was like, this is what I am doing...Instead of you researching it... and giving up after two weeks. She would be like, no keep going, just tweak it this way. So that was good.”
The Power of the Coaching Relationship	“I think they are easy to implement because...they were easily explained to us...we had a reference to why we needed the strategy and how to use the strategy and when to use the strategy.” “if you didn’t agree with what she was talking about you could actually tell her. She wouldn’t take offence.” “...she {consultant} would...suggest something and I would go, actually I have already tried that. Or I did that but not quite like that. And she had this way of just ...adapting the strategy...”

Program Component Limitations

Theme	Description
Accessing the Intended Components	Participants described challenges in accessing and engaging with the verbal feedback sessions and written feedback due to timing, competing responsibilities, or practical constraints within the school day.
Time and Competing Demands	Time pressures and classroom demands were reported as obstacles that limited some participants' ability to fully participate in the program, including opportunities to trial strategies or attend all the different components regularly.
Challenges Achieving Whole-Team Participation	Program design features sometimes restricted equitable participation, particularly for education support staff. Scheduling constraints and the structure of classroom release time meant that some staff could not fully engage with coaching or feedback opportunities, limiting the program's reach across the whole classroom team.

Program Component Limitations

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Accessing the Intended Components	“Even being full time, it was probably hard to catch up. Just because you’re in the class ... You're on recess or lunchtime yard duty, it's just a bit hard to discuss how to implement them properly.” “...the emails for me, were the thing that I engaged the least with. Not that I don’t see value in them, just because I found it more tricky to find time to dive into that.”
Time and Competing Demands	“Yeah, it was definitely a barrier, that component of trying to work out when we were going to get time together.” “When we have got moving around a lot, the program changing constantly and things like that. When I am trying to do that alone, the strategies, it’s really difficult...”
Challenges Achieving Whole-Team Participation	“It was tricky because {the consultant} would obviously come when you had time release, so the aides were usually wherever your class was.” “If we could have done a bit more with the ES, that would have been great, but it’s so hard with the timetable.”

Overall Key Findings

These findings suggest that structured, school-based professional development grounded in applied behaviour analysis can improve educators' implementation of inclusive practices.

Ongoing coaching delivered within an MTSS framework can lead to sustained practice change and generalisation of Inclusive Education practices into everyday teaching.

Next Steps

1. Collecting follow up data in the 6 schools
2. Added a school-wide data sheet to new schools
3. Piloting an Early Years version in 2026

		Sessional kinder (2 room model)	Long daycare (3 room model)
Program length	Frequency	16 x 6 hr days (4 per term)	16 x 7.5 hr days (4 per term)
	Intensity (direct coaching)	1.5-2 hrs per room weekly	
	Duration	12 months	
Participants		3 educators per room, across 2 rooms	3 educators per room, across 3 rooms
Leadership		1 key staff member (min. 30 minutes per fortnight)	
Students		0-3 students per room	
Workshops		3 x 2 hour workshops	
Feedback		30-45 minutes per room (group of educators)	

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Questions

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