

Inclusive Literacy Design and Evaluation Report

September 15, 2023

Inclusive Literacy Design Model Dr Maree Kirk

Introduction

Dr. Kirk's Inclusive Literacy Design Model focuses on creating equitable, accessible, and engaging literacy opportunities for diverse learners, particularly students with learning disabilities and Down syndrome. The model emphasises the intersection of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, **multimodal approaches**, and **culturally responsive practices** to support diverse needs in literacy education.

Core Principles of the Model:

1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

- UDL serves as the foundation of the model, advocating for flexible teaching methods that accommodate individual learning differences.
- The model prioritises designing lessons with multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to ensure accessibility for all learners.
- Example: Using visual aids, tactile tools, and auditory resources to teach literacy concepts.
- Example: Using Holistic models to ensure cultural competency is intrinsic in every part of the day and curriculum.

2. Multimodal and Multi-Sensory Learning:

- The model integrates multiple modalities (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile) to enhance comprehension and retention for students with varied learning preferences.
- Dr. Kirk emphasises the importance of leveraging technology (e.g., video, interactive apps) alongside traditional tools (e.g., storyboards, sensory kits) to create dynamic learning experiences.
- Example: Adapting stories into multisensory formats, such as pairing text with pictures, sound effects, and hands-on activities.

3. Cultural Responsiveness:

- The model incorporates **Te Ao Māori principles** and other cultural frameworks to create a sense of belonging and relevance for all students, particularly those from indigenous and minority backgrounds.
- Stories and texts are adapted or selected to reflect students' cultural contexts, promoting engagement and pride.
- Example: Using purakau (Māori narratives) to teach literacy while fostering cultural connection and identity.

4. **Inclusive Resource Development:**

- Dr. Kirk advocates for creating and adapting resources that are accessible to learners with disabilities. This includes auditory aides, large print, and digital tools tailored for diverse cognitive and physical needs.
- The model emphasises co-designing materials with educators, whānau (families), and specialists to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

5. **Collaboration and Professional Development:**

- The model encourages educators to collaborate within their **Kāhui Ako** (Communities of Learning) and participate in ongoing professional development.
- This collaboration builds collective expertise, sharing best practices and resources to create consistent and inclusive literacy practices across schools.

Practical Applications of the Model:

- **Literacy Kits:** Developing adaptable kits that integrate sensory tools, visual aids, and auditory supports.
- **Classroom Design:** Creating literacy-friendly spaces, such as quiet corners for reading and sensory areas to support engagement.
- **Lesson Planning:** Embedding UDL principles into planning, ensuring lessons cater to diverse learners from the outset.
- **Professional Learning:** Conducting workshops and seminars for educators to build capacity in using multimodal and culturally responsive practices.

Impact of the Model:

Dr. Kirk's Inclusive Literacy Design Model empowers educators to transform literacy education by addressing systemic barriers and tailoring instruction to the strengths and needs of all learners. The approach fosters a supportive, equitable learning environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive in literacy development.

Evaluation

The Inclusive Literacy Design Workshop held on September 15, 2023, aimed to equip educators with innovative, multimodal strategies to enhance literacy outcomes for students with learning disabilities and Down syndrome. This professional learning and development (PLD) session, organised under the Network of Expertise (NEX), focused on providing tools, frameworks, and resources to foster inclusivity and engagement in diverse learning environments.

Background Students with learning disabilities often face significant barriers to accessing literacy education. These barriers necessitate a shift towards multimodal and multi-sensory teaching practices, which cater to diverse learning needs. The workshop emphasised Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and culturally responsive approaches, aligning with national priorities to enhance educational equity and inclusivity.

Evaluation Methodology The evaluation of this workshop combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including:

- Survey responses from 15 participants – senior teachers.
- Open-ended qualitative feedback.
- Observational data recorded by facilitators.

This multi-method approach ensured a holistic understanding of participant experiences and the workshop's impact.

Participant Demographics The participants included teachers, early childhood educators, special education coordinators, and teacher aides. Ethnic diversity was noted, with representation from New Zealand European, Māori, and Pacific Islander communities. This diversity enriched discussions and underscored the workshop's emphasis on culturally responsive literacy practices.

Findings

1. Workshop Effectiveness

- 100% of participants reported that the workshop provided opportunities for meaningful discussion. One attendee remarked, "The breakout sessions helped me connect with peers and exchange practical ideas for inclusive literacy."
- 93% of participants rated the PLD materials as relevant and useful to their teaching practice. A teacher noted, "The multimodal resources shared today were directly applicable to my classroom needs."

2. Key Learnings

- **Multimodal and Multi-Sensory Approaches:** Participants appreciated the emphasis on integrating multi-sensory strategies into literacy instruction. "Using all five senses to engage learners opens new pathways for comprehension and retention," shared one educator.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** The workshop highlighted the importance of incorporating Te Ao Māori perspectives. One participant reflected, "Working with experienced kuia and weaving in kaupapa Māori principles made the session deeply impactful."
- **UDL Principles:** The value of UDL was underscored, with one attendee commenting, "What works for neurodiverse learners benefits everyone—explicit, planned lessons are key."

3. Practical Applications

- **Resource Utilisation:** Many participants planned to use multimodal materials, including video clips and visual supports, in their teaching. "We're building literacy kits to adapt books for multi-sensory learning," shared a teacher aide.
- **Whole-School Implementation:** Some educators expressed intentions to extend workshop insights to a school-wide level. "We're planning staff training sessions to ensure consistent inclusive practices across the school," noted a principal.

- **Collaborative Networks:** Participants emphasised the importance of sharing strategies within Kāhui Ako (Communities of Learning). "The resources provided will enrich our Kāhui Ako collaboration," shared one participant.

4. Barriers to Implementation

- **Time Constraints:** Limited time for integrating new strategies was a recurring theme. "Balancing the demands of teaching while adopting new methods is challenging," one respondent noted.
- **Resource Gaps:** Attendees highlighted the need for more tailored materials. "Additional resources to support multi-sensory literacy practices would be invaluable," suggested one educator.

Participant Reflections Key quotes from participants included:

- "Don't assume a child doesn't understand; they may express comprehension in unique ways."
- "Multimodal learning makes literacy fun and accessible for everyone."
- "This workshop re-energised my teaching practice and inspired new approaches to inclusive education."

Recommendations

1. **Expand Professional Learning Opportunities:** Develop follow-up sessions focusing on advanced multimodal strategies and collaborative teaching practices.
2. **Enhance Resource Accessibility:** Create a central repository of adaptable literacy resources tailored to diverse learning needs.
3. **Support Collaboration:** Facilitate Kāhui Ako networks to share best practices and resources for inclusive literacy.
4. **Address Systemic Barriers:** Advocate for dedicated time within school schedules to implement inclusive literacy initiatives.

Conclusion The Inclusive Literacy Design Workshop provided participants with actionable strategies to enhance literacy instruction for diverse learners. By emphasising multimodal, culturally responsive, and UDL-aligned practices, the workshop laid the groundwork for meaningful changes in literacy education. Continued support through professional learning and resource development will be vital to sustaining this impact and advancing educational equity across Aotearoa.