

# Educator Guide: Using the Early Clues Flower Tool

## What is the Early Clues Flower?

The Early Clues Flower is a reflective tool designed to help educators identify early signs of neurodivergent sensory, communication, and emotional regulation differences in young children. It supports you to notice small, often overlooked signals that may indicate a child's unique sensory or communication profile—and helps you adapt your practice to meet their needs.

## Why Use the Early Clues Flower?

### Spot the Subtle Signs

Neurodivergent children often express their needs in ways that don't match typical expectations. These early clues can be easy to miss, especially when a child is masking or blending in with peers.

The Flower encourages you to pause and notice.

### Empower Responsive Practice

When you understand a child's early clues, you can adapt your environment and interactions in ways that feel safe and supportive.

### Link to Quality Practice

The tool connects to EYLF outcomes, NQS standards, and best practices in inclusive education, reinforcing your professional role in nurturing every child's wellbeing.



# How to Use the Early Clues Flower

## Observe:

Use the categories in the Flower (Movement, Auditory, Visual, Tactile, etc.)

to guide your observations. Notice:

What do you see?

When does it happen?

Are there patterns across environments or activities?

Examples:

A child who often covers their ears during group time (Auditory Clue).

A child who loves to swing and spin (Movement Clue).

A child who looks away or avoids eye contact during transitions (Visual Clue).

## Reflect

Fill out the Flower petals with your observations. Each petal is a space to note your insights.

💡 Use open, curious language—avoid assumptions or pathologising.

For example:

“I noticed Leo taps his feet and bounces on the spot when music starts.”

“Ava prefers to sit near the window, where it’s quieter and visually less busy.”

## Collaborate

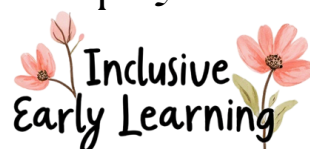
Share your observations with your team and families. Invite their insights—families are experts in their children.

Use phrases like:

“I wonder if you’ve noticed...”

“How does your child show comfort or discomfort at home?”

“What have you found helps your child feel safe or calm?”



## Adapt

Use the Early Clues Flower as a springboard for responsive practice.  
Adjust your environment (e.g., dim lights, provide movement breaks).

Offer choices and sensory supports.

Plan transitions that match the child's regulation needs.

## Revisit & Update

The Flower is not a one-time activity—it's a living reflection. Children grow and change, and so do their needs. Revisit the Flower regularly, especially when you notice new patterns or changes in a child's behaviour.

## Tips for Success

Stay Curious – No two children show their clues in exactly the same way.

Be Gentle – Children mask or withdraw when they don't feel safe. Use the Flower to help create that safety.

Link to Practice – Connect what you see to EYLF, NQS, and your centre's philosophy of inclusive, child-led learning.

## Connecting to Quality Areas & EYLF

NQS Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

The Flower helps you tailor your planning to each child's unique needs.

NQS Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

Building trust and connection starts with noticing and respecting a child's clues.

EYLF Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Recognising and responding to a child's sensory and communication profile supports their identity as a learner.

## Final Thought

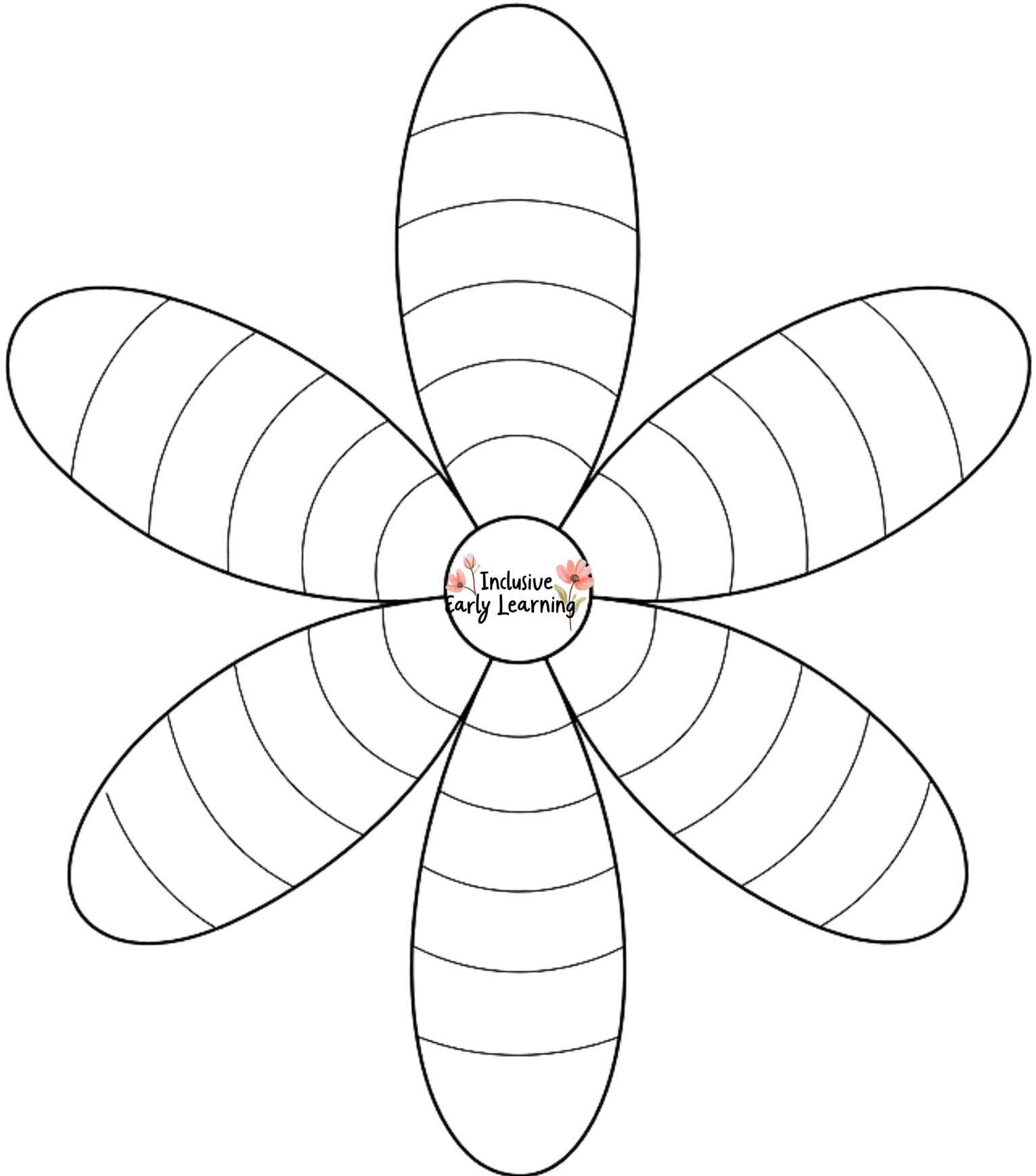
The Early Clues Flower is a gentle reminder that every child has a story to tell—sometimes without words. Let's listen with our eyes, hearts, and practices.



# Early Clues Education Reflection Form



# Early Clues Flower



# EARLY CLUES EDUCATOR REFLECTION

What stood out to me when I filled in this child's profile?

Are there times this child seems more calm or more unsettled?  
What's happening then?

How does this child show me they're feeling uncomfortable —  
even in small ways?

Have I been missing signs that this child needs support with their  
sensory or emotional needs?

# EARLY CLUES EDUCATOR REFLECTION

What can I change in the environment or routine to help this child feel safer or more comfortable?

How do I usually respond when this child is dysregulated — and is there something I could try differently?

How well do I know this child's cues — and what would help me learn more?

Who else could I talk to (family, team, therapists) to better understand and support this child?