

# Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland



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## ELI in the Docklands – 5 Years On



The ELI is a community based project at the NCI that aims to support children and families living in the Docklands area, to succeed in education and fulfil their potential. The project was officially launched in 2008 and has been working successfully with children, parents, early years care and education centres (ECCE), schools and community services for the past 5 years. The Children's Research Centre in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) completed a baseline evaluation of the project in 2011 to capture the experiences of those involved and to make suggestions for improvements in the future.

### We are delighted to be able to share some of the findings with you:

- ELI had made an impact on the home learning environment of families. Learning is being perceived by children, young people and their extended families as enjoyable and something to be shared across the family.
- The educational aspirations and attainment levels of the children in the Docklands have increased with students in 2nd and 6th class scoring above the norms in terms of their educational aspirations and above schools in similar areas in terms of their educational attainment.
- ELI has succeeded in deepening parents' involvement in their children's development, with most parents wanting more information and more programmes.
- The parental involvement activities had a ripple effect as they brought parents, some of whom had incomplete second level education, into NCI, promoting the idea of lifelong learning.
- All of those involved (parents, early years staff, teachers, public health nurses, NCI, community centres and youth workers) in the Docklands are working effectively together to enhance the educational outcomes for children and their families.

ELI would like to congratulate the children, families and schools in the Docklands on these results and we hope that we can continue to work together and build on them in the next 5 years.

### Some of the challenges that the research found included:

- Securing funding to continue the work in these challenging economic times.
- Further supporting parents and young people, moving from primary to secondary school and on to third level, as these can be very difficult times for both parents and young people.



PCHP Home Visitor and child from the Docklands, enjoying a story together.



### NEYAI - Early Numeracy Project - (0-6 years)

The Early Numeracy Project aims to improve early numeracy and maths skills for children aged 0-6 years old in the Docklands. There are many different parts to the programme: Workshops for Parents, Early Numeracy Activity Weeks and Training and Support for children, their parents, families, and educators.

*"It helped me to understand simple things I can do at home with my child to help improve his numeracy skills." – (Parent Participant at NEYAI Numeracy Workshops)*

### Professional Development Workshops for Early Educators

This programme supports staff to engage in the National Frameworks Síolta and Aistear, to help educators to plan and provide high quality care and education for children and parents/carers. The staff attend regular workshops on topics such as play and learning, early literacy & numeracy, partnerships with parents, and professional practice.

*"Our centre has made improvements in programme activities as a result of training provided by ELI. All support from ELI was gratefully received and acted on accordingly to improve our practice." (Early Years Educator, Docklands Preschool)*

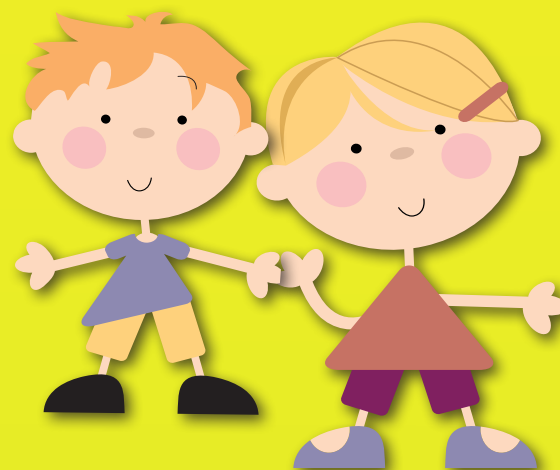


### Parents Together Community Course - (0-6 years)

Produced in partnership with the Parents Plus Charity, this programme helps parents find new ways to improve their skills at encouraging their children and helping them learn, while successfully managing difficult behaviour.

*"The most helpful part of the course was learning to be calm and respond well to children when misbehaving." (Parent Participant on Parents Together Community Course)*

## Early Learning Initiative



### Parent Child Home Programme PCHP - (1 ½ - 3 ½ years)

The Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) is a "learning through play experience" for parents and their preschool children. It is designed to strengthen the natural bond between parent and child and to encourage a love of learning. It also helps prepare children for later success in school. PCHP is delivered in the Docklands by trained Home Visitors from the community.

*"I learnt the importance of education from an early age. I didn't know it could start that early." (Parent Participant on PCHP)*



### Parent and Toddler Group (0-3 years)

This programme gives parents an opportunity to learn how to support their children's development, while networking with other parents.

### Primary (4+)

The Stretch to Learn Primary Programme aims to support and encourage parents, children and families to succeed in education and to reach their potential during the primary school years.

#### Programmes include:

- Stretch to Learn Achievement Awards in 3rd, 4th & 5th class
- Zoom Ahead with Books – Family Reading Project in the Junior Classes
- NCI Challenges – Rummikub, Monopoly & Table Quiz in 2nd, 3rd, 4th class
- Education Guidance Programme – 5th & 6th class

*"Children enjoyed spending time with their parents. After project was finished, children still ask are we doing Zoom Ahead tonight?" (Primary Teacher in Docklands school)*



### Second Level (12+)

The Stretch to Learn Second Level Programme aims to support young people and their parents to succeed in secondary school and to progress to further and higher education.

#### Programmes include:

- Stretch to Learn Achievement Awards in 1st, 2nd & 5th year
- Tuition Support in Maths & English for Junior and Leaving Cert students
- Discover University summer programme

*"This programme is very worthwhile, It is quite motivating for my child and she is now very enthusiastic to get into college." (Parent of student on Discover University Programme)*

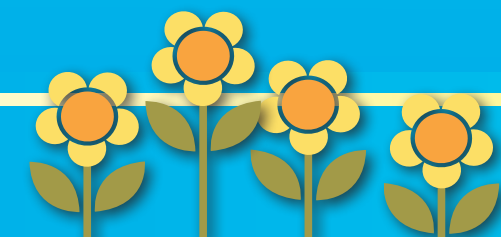


### Third Level (17+)

The Stretch to Learn Third Level Programme is available to young people from Docklands who attended local schools, and who progress to study at NCI. It includes financial, personal and career development support for students who in return participate in the work of ELI as role models to younger students.

*"It made me think more about my future and helped improve my personal development, it took a lot of financial worries off which made college life easier." (3rd level student)*

## Your Child's Education Journey Starts from Birth – Support available in the Docklands





# Going to College

Deryck Tormey, Schools Liaison Officer - NCI

As the new crop of Leaving Certificate students settle into their final year in school, the question of "What Next" may be coming up in schools and homes across the Docklands.

For young people who plan to continue to further or higher education, Deryck Tormey, Schools Liaison Officer here in NCI, offers some advice.



*"Your first step is to do your research and start this as early as possible. Find out as much information as you can about different types of courses, course content, course requirements, different colleges and job opportunities, as you are making a very important decision."*

Deryck recommends the following sources of information: School Guidance Counsellor, Visitors to your school from different colleges/providers, Education Fairs e.g. Higher Options, and to attend College Open Days and ask lots of questions!

## Useful Websites:

- [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) - Search all courses from PLC to college
- [www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) - Information on special entry routes for students with a disability or coming from disadvantaged backgrounds
- [www.campus.ie](http://www.campus.ie) – lots of insights into life in college.

## CAO Process:

Students wishing to apply for any college in Ireland are required to apply through the Central Applications Office (CAO). The application is made online or by post each year before **1st February**.

## Tips:

- Apply early, don't leave it until the last minute.
- Fill out all of the choices from levels 6 & 7 to 8 in your genuine order of preference, not according to last years' points, as they may change.
- You can change your mind up until 1st July.
- For more information, check out the website [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie).

## PLC Courses:

Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses are another option available to young people. They offer a mixture of practical work, academic work and work experience, can be one or two years in length and are focussed on students who wish to train for a particular job or who want to progress on to further education.

According to Deryck, *"A PLC course is a very good choice for a student who isn't sure what they want to do and it is a good idea for all leaving cert students to apply for a PLC course as a back-up option in case they do not get their CAO choice."*

Applications are made directly to the colleges at various times across the year. For more information, check out the website [www.plccourses.ie](http://www.plccourses.ie).

## Advice for Parents:

Having a child in 6th year in secondary school can be a difficult time for parents too. Deryck advises parents to take an interest in their child's decision making, but to be careful not to push too much and add to their stress.

*"Parents can help by talking through options with their child as they go through school to make sure they realise the consequences of different choices, e.g. they might need certain subjects or subject levels for specific college courses. Most importantly, parents can help by being positive and supportive through this important time in their lives."*

For more information on supporting your child to go to college, contact Brigina Crowe on (01) 4498618 or email [bcrowe@ncirl.ie](mailto:bcrowe@ncirl.ie).

## College Myth Buster

Many people worry about the costs of going to college. While it is important for young people and parents to try and save some money in advance if they can, almost 50% of college students in Ireland overall are eligible for a grant towards the costs of going to college!

This means that based on your family's income, the number of children and the proximity of your home to the college, you can receive an annual fund to help with the day-to-day costs. The grant will also cover the college registration fee, so you do not have to pay anything directly to the college.

For more information on financial supports available you can check out [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie).