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Implementing Values through Community Action Research
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The Early Learning Initiative is a community-based educational initiative aimed at addressing educational disadvantage through the provision of an integrated programme for children, their parents and families, and educators from early years up to third level. Acknowledging, respecting and utilising the expertise and experience within the local families and communities is part of our ethos. We operate as a partnership where all are committed to involving the whole community in actively supporting and planning for the best possible education for children both at home and at school (Bleach 2010).

A community action research approach, which creates a learning community that works together to 'nurture and sustain a knowledge-creating system', based on valuing equally each other, is used (Senge and Scharmer 2001, 240). The action reflection cycle of observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify (McNiff and Whitehead 2006) informs the development of our programmes and ensured that plans are implemented. Learning networks (NCSL 2002), reflective practice and 'dynamic conversations' (Schön 1983) are key elements

The National College of Ireland's Code of Conduct for Researchers is observed and good practice in relation to action research is followed.

Four years of experience in working on action research projects has developed a sense of ownership and responsibility for the educational welfare of children from all involved. The 'educational capital' of the community has increased and the educational and career aspirations of all the stakeholders have been raised. Action research supports the implementation of change in a way that enhances participants' capabilities, both individually and collectively, to produce results they truly care about (Senge and Scharmer 2001).

References

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