



**National
College of
Ireland**

Early Learning Initiative at National College of Ireland

Welcome Back

The Early Learning Initiative at National College of Ireland is a community based education project working in the inner city docklands area. The initiative works closely with parents and children along with existing service providers; the HSE, childcare centres, primary and secondary schools and youth services, to support the education of young people from birth right up to first job!

This newsletter will outline some of our recent activities and tell you what we have planned for the coming months.

We would like to wish you all a successful new school year and we hope you enjoy our first newsletter!



Teacher Eileen Flynn and Principal Mary Moore from St Laurence O'Toole's Junior Boys School choosing books for their school with the Book Grant from the Early Learning Initiative.

Launch of Community Reading Partnership

One of the main aims of the Early Learning Initiative at National College of Ireland is to encourage and support children and young people to enjoy reading.

The Community Reading Partnership (CRP) is a project that hopes to create a community-wide celebration and excitement around books and the joy of reading. The project links in with the other literacy projects of the ELI; the home visitor programme, activities in the childcare settings and in the schools, and projects with the local library service.

The ELI has given a grant to each of the primary schools involved in the ELI Project and to each of the childcare settings, so that they can improve the quantity and quality of the books in their settings. This will ensure that all of the children's interests and needs are facilitated when they go to choose a book.

To celebrate this grant we have organised a number of events and activities with the childcare settings and schools throughout September and October. Please see the box attached for a list of these events. The activities will then culminate with a celebration event in the NCI on the 21st October for the schools, childcare centres and parents and children.

Events in September and October

12th September

Charles Higson Launches new book in Young Bond Series in Easons

19th September

Oliver Jeffers Storytelling in Easons

29th Sep. - 13th Oct.

Storytelling with Rab Fulton & Clare Muireann Murphy in seven local primary schools

29th Sep. to 3rd Oct.

Teddy Bears Picnic in twelve community childcare centres

21st October

Community Celebration Event,
National College of Ireland, 11am—12pm.

The Parent Child Home Programme



Home Visitors working with the Early Learning Initiative

The Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) is a 'learning through play experience' for parents and their preschool children. The programme helps to develop a child's capacity to communicate, helps mothers and fathers become more confident parents, and strengthens the natural bond between the parent and child. Trained home visitors visit families twice a week for two school years. They bring age appropriate books and toys which are used to encourage language development. The books and toys are gifts to the family. Families participating must have a child between the ages of 1½ and 3½ to be involved in the programme. Training for new Home Visitors took place recently at NCI and many local people took part. Some will apply for positions as home visitors but others will return to their childcare centres, schools, or families, with their new skills.



NCI President Dr. Paul Mooney congratulates Megan Plunkett from Ringsend Technical Institute at the 2008 Stretch to Learn Awards.



Samantha Corcoran, Chloe Gaynor, Eoghan Connolly and Calvin Nolan from City Quay National School who received awards at the 2008 Stretch to Learn Awards.

Just Another Survey?

The Importance of Research

At the Early Learning Initiative, we are always trying to improve and develop our programmes so that our communities, families, children and funders get the best return on their investment, be it time, energy or financial input. An important way of 'checking-up' on our work is to conduct research using surveys, questionnaires, observations or simply gathering data such as attendance figures. We use this information to evaluate our programmes and the impact they are having on the children, families and schools involved in the Project. Ultimately they tell us what is working and how we can make it even better. Sincere thanks to all of you who have patiently participated in this data collection so far.

Child-care Centres Involve Parents in their Children's Learning



Caroline Tierney, Yvonne Kelly, Donna Flood, Eva Dillon and Caroline Maher; participants on the training programme on 'Involving Parents in their Children's Learning'.

12 childcare workers from 12 local community childcare centres have been involved in a training programme called 'Parents Involvement in their Children's Learning' which is being run by the Early Learning Initiative in association with the Pen Green Centre for under 5s and their Families in the UK.

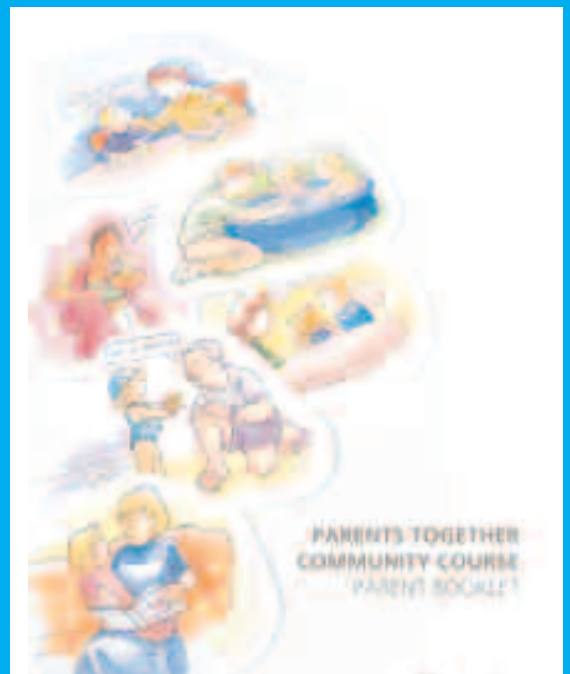
This is an exciting new development in preschool education in Ireland as it aims to encourage parents and childcare staff to work together for children's learning. Parents are the experts on their own children and childcare workers have professional knowledge of child development. By working together, an individual learning plan for each child can be developed.

The training is ongoing and the group travelled to Corby in the UK in June for a week of training in child development concepts. The aim of the training is to develop a "Dublin Approach to Engaging Parents". As this project is so exciting and new, a group of 5 travelled to Norway in September to present a paper on the project at the European Early Childhood Education Research Conference, where it was very well received.

Parents Together Parenting Programme

Parents Together is a six week programme for parents who want to discuss parenting issues with a facilitator and other parents. It focuses on how to build a strong relationship with your child and also deals with some behaviour management issues. Parents Together was developed from the Parents Plus programme at the Mater Hospital and several pilot groups were run in early 2008 to test the programme.

Parents Together will be launched in January 2009 and will be run locally in schools and childcare centres so ask your school or child-care centre about joining!



The Critical Hours - After School Clubs

Current research in Education and Child Development has stressed the importance of children's experiences in the hours 'after school'. They suggest that involvement in effective programmes for as little as 1 hour a week, can have a positive impact on academic progress and emotional well-being. At the Early Learning Initiative we are currently developing a number of pilot programmes within the Docklands Area. Stay tuned for more news in the upcoming months.

Meet the Early Learning Initiative Team



Director
Dr. Josephine Bleach



Project Coordinator
Catriona Flood



Educational Psychologist
& Researcher
Grainne McKenna



Home Visiting Coordinator
Beth Fagan



Stretch to Learn Coordinator
Brigina Crowe

Some Tips for Reading with Young Children!

Try to read together every day, preferably in a cosy spot.
Bed time is perfect!

Tell your child the name of the book and the author
(also the illustrator, if different).

Label everything, even items your child knows already.

Read with enthusiasm in your voice.
It does not have to be a loud voice, just enthusiastic!

Read the same books again and again. Children learn by repetition and
they love knowing what is coming next!

Know when to stop – if your child has lost interest, it is ok to give up and
try again another time.

And Finally.....

Enjoy reading with your child!