

# CDI Newsletter



Meeting needs, making changes, improving outcomes

April 2011, Volume 5, Issue 3

## Introduction:

This month's newsletter particularly focuses on literacy, and given the attention this area currently is receiving nationally, this is very timely.

Like many others, CDI welcome the Draft National Plan on Literacy and Numeracy, and we believe the Doodle Den experience and model of Speech and Language Therapy being delivered in Tallaght West could be extremely helpful as these discussion progress.

We were also delighted to meet with the INTO to discuss these developments, as well as the role that early years can and has played in helping children achieve their developmental milestones. We were very pleased to respond to the INTO's invitation to make a submission to their discussion document on literacy and again anticipate ongoing and practice issues, especially as we being to receive evaluation results in the coming months.

CDI very much welcomes the establishment of a Department of Children, and like everyone else, we watch, observe and (try) to influence the ultimate responsibilities and remit of this important structure.

We have plenty of news and events, so read on!

Marian Quinn, CEO



April 28<sup>th</sup>, 12pm-2pm  
RUA RED

May 26<sup>th</sup>, 12pm-2pm  
RUA RED



## Jump! Slam! Volley! CDI's All-In Volleyball Tournament

The Childhood Development Initiative will hold a one day volleyball tournament on the **28<sup>th</sup> May** at the Tallaght Leisure Centre from **10am-6pm**.

All you need is six willing participants to take part, no skill required, it's all about fun and getting to know those that live and work in Tallaght West. Practice sessions take place every Wednesday evening 5-6pm at the Tallaght Leisure centre.

For more information or to register your team please contact Paula on 4940030 or email [Paula@twcdi.ie](mailto:Paula@twcdi.ie).

## Doodle Den: A Facilitator's Perspective

The Doodle Den here in Scoil Chaitlin Maude has had a busy year so far! The children have been busy writing, playing literacy games and reading independently. The benefits of Doodle Den are evident this year in particular. For example, one of the children was one of the less mature children in their class when Doodle Den began. Since beginning the programme, he has begun to write legibly and create beautiful illustrations, as well as reading for his parents and teachers. We are all thrilled with his progress, and his class teacher and parents have attributed much of his maturation to the extra support and fun learning environment which Doodle Den provides.

This is just one of many success stories coming out of Doodle Den Scoil Chaitlin Maude. The first class teacher has noticed a marked improvement in the literacy attainment levels in the class since the majority of the class attended the programme last year. The children are particularly enjoying the social aspect of Doodle Den. It draws together a range of children from the two senior infant classes in the school for afterschool activities. The entire school community are in agreement that Doodle Den is succeeding, in not only increasing children's levels of literacy, but also in the involvement of parents in their children's education. They are an integral part of the Doodle Den programme. We are very aware of and grateful for the experience and support provided by Doodle Den and we hope to see the programme continue in our school in the future.

*Noise- Doodle Den Teacher*



## A Parent's view of Doodle Den

Here we get some feedback on a parent whose son, Ryan, has been participating in Doodle Den.

Ryan has come on so well since starting Doodle Den. His reading and writing have come on brilliant since doing Doodle Den. He recognises sounds and words so much more easily as a result his reading, writing and spelling in Doodle Den. He is also a lot more confident doing homework.

Ryan looks forward to Doodle Den every week. He loves jumping the on the words game and story time and I am so happy with his progress. His teachers are lovely and have a great relationship with the children. I would definitely recommend this programme to other parents.



## Literacy and Numeracy on the Policy Agenda:

In November 2010, the Department of Education and Skills launched 'Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People, a draft plan to improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools'. The Draft Plan identified methods of increasing literacy skills and invited comments from interested parties.

Key targets in the Draft Plan include:

- Increasing children's achievement on literacy and numeracy assessments in primary and post primary;
- Increasing time spent on maths and literacy in primary schools;
- Improving professional practice in the teaching of literacy and numeracy;
- Supporting capacity building in school leadership and assessment and reporting of children's progress;
- Enabling parents and communities to support children's literacy and numeracy skills

The Draft Plan provides a framework to discuss how best to support children and young people to develop their literacy skills. CDI welcomes the prioritisation of literacy and numeracy which form the bedrock of all learning. Providing training and ongoing methods of professional development to teachers and early years professionals is an important part of any plan to improve literacy. The focus on outcomes within the Draft Plan is useful in terms of supporting plans to make improvements.

However the assessment of children's literacy skills needs to be accompanied by a focus on creating literacy rich learning environments for children.

CDI suggests that enabling children to engage in learning outside of school is also a key way of supporting the development of literacy and numeracy skills. In order to achieve success in literacy parents, schools and community organisations need to work together in creative ways. CDI's innovative service Doodle Den supports children to actively participate in literacy tasks outside of school time. Doodle Den also focuses on providing parents with opportunities to support and get involved in their children's learning. Supporting the development of an enhanced home learning environment is key to enabling children to develop their literacy skills, and increased utilisation of library services is being tested as an element of the approach. Central to all plans to enhance children's literacy must be to view the child as an active agent in his or her own learning. CDI suggests that supporting all professionals to harness children's natural creativity and interest is important to developing and maintaining children's motivation to learn.



## Innovative Research: Parent's Role in Emergent Writing

Innovative research on literacy is contributing to a great understanding of the processes involved in literacy and how parents, educators and community organisations can support them. Research by Neumann and Neumann in 2010 provides insights into how parents can support children's early writing. Emergent writing skills include positive attitudes towards writing, understanding the functions of writing, using scribbles and drawings to represent ideas, and linking letter sounds to attempts to write words. Research suggests learning to write is supported by children taking part in real and meaningful writing activities such as labelling clothes and drawings, writing/drawing shopping lists and/or birthday cards. Parents can support children's writing by providing materials, guiding children in letter formations, sounding out words and praising all writing attempts.

Below are some examples of children's emergent writing supported by a parent taken from Neumann and Neumann's research article. Neumann and Neumann note that parents are well placed to support children in writing activities that are tailored to the child's interest. Providing parents with practical ways they can support their children's writing will ensure children are provided with opportunities to explore writing in a fun and relaxed way. Parents can also extend children's writing skills by supporting them to write on lines and have spacing between words.

For more information on this research see Neumann, M.L. and Neumann, R.L. (2010); Parental Strategies to scaffold emergent writing skills in the pre-school child within the home environment. *Early Years*, Vol 30 pp 79-94.

### Examples of Emergent Writing:



## Examples of Doodle Den Work:

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> January  
Evan

baby

1. baby ruby is  
my baby.

2. she cries  
a lot.

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> Jan  
Nehad

cat

1. He is white  
and has brown spots.

2. His name is  
nick.

3. He likes to  
eat ~~dog~~ cat food.

Date: 24 January  
0

Spot My Dog

1. He is white  
and gray.

2. His name is  
Jack and Spot.

3. SHE LIKES  
DOG FOOD.

Doodle Den children are supported to develop their writing skills and encouraged to learn how to write their own stories. The children attempt to spell words by sounding out and as you can see the children write about different things and demonstrate their skills developed and growing confidence.



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## Better Services, Better Outcomes Conference: Integrating Quality in Children's Services

This conference is aimed at frontline practitioners working with children, young people and families. It will:

- Consider research and best practice in relation to quality services;
- Explore organisational processes and staff support requirements which facilitate quality;
- Highlight current policy frameworks which inform and shape quality services.

**Further information to follow.**

**Wednesday  
7<sup>th</sup> September  
2011**

**The Irish Law  
Society  
9.30am-6pm**

**Confirmed Speakers / Panel Members:**

**Mary Doyle**, Director General, Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs;

**Jim Mulherrins**, Principal Officer, Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education and Science

**Professor Danny Perkins**, Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Penn State

**Gordan Jeyes**, National Director, Children and Family Social Services

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**Thought  
for the  
day!**

" Don't be dependent on others to meet your needs. They'll let you down every time. And that's because meeting your needs is not their job - that's yours."

Robert Mack

**Visit us at:**

**[www.twcdi.ie](http://www.twcdi.ie)**

May 26<sup>th</sup> 12-2pm at RUA RED,

'**How Are Our Children Today?**' presenting by Dr. Tara Murphy, Research and Evaluation Officer, CDI

This seminar will discuss some of the key findings and trends relating to child wellbeing from CDI's **Community Survey** which is a follow up to an original community survey "**How Are Our Kids?**" This seminar will provide insights into any changes in the profile of children and families in Tallaght West in relation to, for example, their living situation, socioeconomic status, education, access to services, use of community facilities, community connectedness, health and general wellbeing.

Tara holds a BSc Microbiology, a BA (Hons) Psychology and a PhD from Trinity College Dublin. She has a range of experience conducting both qualitative and quantitative research and analyses as part of her PhD. She has been a part-time lecturer and examiner on the Behavioural Science course in the School of Medicine since 2005. Tara is the Research and Evaluation Officer with CDI since September 2007. One of her primary roles is managing the complexities of six robust and independent evaluations alongside several related initiatives.

