

Welcome...

...to the November newsletter of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education! This edition is almost entirely dedicated to the recent launch of the Centre and the introduction of our new logo and “branding”. The December newsletter will contain more detailed information of our current projects. As always, I would like to invite you to write or e-mail your views or comments on this newsletter, the Centre or early childhood care and education.

Heino Schonfeld, Director

Launch of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

On Thursday, 31st October 2002, the Minister for Education and Science, Mr. Noel Dempsey, T.D. formally launched the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education in St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra.

The event was attended by about a hundred people from all parts of the sector. Following words of welcome from Dr. Pauric Travers, President of St. Patrick’s College and Dr. Frank McMahon, Director of Academic Affairs, Dublin Institute of Technology, the Minister confirmed a number of commitments made by his Government and outlined the brief of the

Centre. Heino Schonfeld, Director of the Centre thanked the Minister for launching the Centre and for his reassuring comments. Mr Schonfeld continued to outline the current work of the Centre.

[Press Release](#)
[Minister’s Speech](#)
[Director’s Speech](#)

CECDE introduces new “corporate identity”

Following an intensive process of consultations and discussions we have now agreed a logo and colour scheme for the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. Please have [a look](#) and let us know what you

Conferences & Events

Consultation Forum on the National Play Policy – November 12th, 2002. Info: 4180582

‘Traveller Childhood, Racism and the Politics of Culture’ – Pavee Point, November 15th, 2002. Info: 8780255

Forum to Address Educational Disadvantage – November 18th, 2002. Info: 8892211

High/Scope Annual Conference – February 28th, 2003. Info: 048 9066 2825

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Minister Noel Dempsey launches new Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

31 October, 2002

The Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey T.D., today officially launched the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education which has been established under the joint management of St Patrick's College and the Dublin Institute of Technology. The Centre, which is located on St Patrick's College campus in Drumcondra, will seek to promote wider access to quality early childhood education in line with the provisions of the Government's White Paper "*Ready to Learn*". Funding for the Centre and its work is being provided by the Department of Education and Science.

The Minister paid tribute to the collaboration between St Patrick's and the DIT in advancing this innovative project. He emphasised the importance of early childhood education and care and its key role in addressing educational disadvantage. "***For children at risk, early intervention at pre-school or at the beginning of primary school is likely to be much more effective than subsequent intervention after problems have emerged later on during school***".

The Minister highlighted the need for an integrated approach to policy and programme development involving all the various stakeholders in the early childhood sector. He noted in this regard that the Centre would be working in close co-ordination with the relevant government departments, agencies, providers and voluntary groups with a view to ensuring coherence and complementarity, building on the many examples of good practice in early childhood care and education which have sprung up in recent years to meet child, family and community needs.

Looking ahead, the Minister said: "***We are now at a major turning point in early childhood education and there are many challenges to be met. The Government is committed to prioritising the needs of children at risk in the development of early childhood care and education and our policies in this area will be child-centred, family focused, equitable, inclusive, action oriented and integrated - reflecting the main principles of the National Children's Strategy***".



**Speech by Mr. Noel Dempsey, T.D.,
Minister for Education & Science
at the launch of the
Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
31 October 2002**

Is cúis mhór áthais dom bheith anseo libh inniu ag an ócáid specialta seo. Tá mé buíoch díbh as an chuireadh agus an fáilte a chur sibh romham.

I am delighted to join you this afternoon to officially launch the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. It was around this time last year that my Department concluded an agreement with St Patrick's College and the Dublin Institute of Technology to establish the Centre and over the past year much work has been done in getting us to where we are now. This is a tribute to the collaborative effort of St Patrick's and the DIT and I would like to thank the representatives of the two institutions who have worked together in advancing this important project.

Our children deserve a good start in life. The importance of early education and the difference that it can make in the formative years of a child's development cannot be overestimated. It is said that 'what is learned in childhood is engraved in stone'. For children at risk of falling behind, early intervention at pre-school or at the beginning of primary school is likely to be much more effective than subsequent intervention after problems have emerged later on during school.

Policy makers have recognised that equitable access to quality early childhood education and care can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for children and support the broad educational and social needs of families. The Centre will have a key role in furthering this objective. Its focus will be on promoting quality, access and effective co-ordination in a sector which has grown considerably in recent years and where many different models of provision have been developed by private providers and community and voluntary groups.

There have been a number of milestones on the journey to today's launch. The National Forum on Early Childhood Education set up by the previous Government in 1998 provided an historic opportunity for the many stakeholders to set an agenda for the way forward in early childhood provision. The comprehensive Report of the National Forum set the context for the White Paper '*Ready to Learn*'. As you know, the twin emphasis in the White Paper is on promoting quality, through the development of a national quality framework for providers in the sector, and on enhancing access, through the development of targeted supports for children at risk. The recommendations set out in the White Paper are reflected in the brief that has been given to the Centre.

Education and care are inseparable but complementary elements in a child's early development. Effective co-ordination is therefore a key requirement for successful policy outcomes in this area. Indeed, if ever there was a case for an integrated approach on the part of government departments and agencies it is in the area of early childhood provision. That is why it is so important for the work of the Centre to be undertaken in close consultation with all the various stakeholders in the field - and as you know there are many. The focus will need to be on complementing, supporting



and enhancing the many examples of good practice in early childhood care and education that have sprung up to meet family and community needs.

I am glad to see that the Centre is now represented on the National Coordinating Childcare Committee chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. As you know, that Department is responsible for the implementation of the National Childcare Strategy. It administers the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme which is providing substantial funding for the development of pre-school childcare facilities around the country. The Centre is also participating in the review of the existing Childcare Regulations initiated by the Department of Health and Children. I would also like to see close links being developed with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. I know that the Centre has been in discussion recently with the NCCA on the preparation of a learning framework for children up to six years of age.

Early childhood education and care has become a major policy priority in OECD countries and, while a variety of approaches have been taken in the light of differing economic, social and cultural contexts, countries share many similar challenges and issues. As you know, my Department has invited the OECD to undertake a review of quality, access and co-ordination in early childhood provision in Ireland. The OECD has now appointed a team of experts to undertake the review and the team will be visiting Ireland in mid-November. The team will be meeting with all the relevant Government Departments and agencies, with the providers and various other stakeholders in the sector. I believe that this review, which should be completed in the new year, will make a valuable input to policy formulation and programme development in this country.

Our children are our greatest treasure. As parents we care deeply about them and we want to give them the best possible start in life. As policy makers in education, we must aim to provide our children with the full range of learning opportunities that will stand to them in later life. Looking ahead, we are now at a major turning point in early childhood education and there are many challenges to be met. The Government is committed to prioritising the needs of children at risk in the development of early childhood education and care and we have set ambitious targets in the new National Anti-Poverty Strategy. Above all, our policies in this area must be child-centred, family oriented, equitable, inclusive, action oriented and integrated - reflecting the main principles of the National Children's Strategy.

The establishment of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education is an important step in the development of early childhood education in Ireland. It provides an exciting opportunity to produce a coherent strategy which builds on the progress made in recent years and delivers tangible results on the ground. I would like to extend my best wishes to the Director of the Centre, Heino Schonfeld and his staff. I would like to thank Pauric Travers, Noirin Hayes and the other members of St. Patrick's College and the DIT who, with the help of my Department, have come together to bring this project to realisation. I have no doubt that, with the combined expertise and commitment of all concerned, the Centre is in very capable hands.



Speech by Mr. Heino Schonfeld. at the launch of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education on October 31st, 2002

Minister,
President Dr. Pauric Travers
Dr. Frank McMahon
Colleagues and friends!

I am delighted to see so many of you present here today, joining us in the launch of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education!
I am particularly pleased to welcome the Minister to this event, which is a celebration of a number of milestones of the Centre.

Minister, I listened with interest to your comments on some of the many challenges facing us in developing and supporting Early Childhood Care and Education in Ireland.

It was most reassuring to hear you confirming the commitments made in the White Paper “Ready to Learn” as well as those in the recent Review of the NAPS and the Programme for Government. It is clear that this Government and certainly you, Minister, are very concerned about increasing the opportunities for children from a disadvantaged background in Irish society.

The evidence making a case for early childhood education and care in combating disadvantage is very strong. Both anecdotal experience of practitioners as well as Irish and international research indicate that the quality of early childhood learning can make the essential difference for a child growing into adulthood and that disadvantaged children benefit disproportionately from early intervention. However, and this is important: they also suffer disproportionately from poor quality settings.

I agree with you, Minister, when you say that the focus of the Centre will be on promoting quality, access and effective co-ordination.

Quality in early childhood care and education is unfortunately – or fortunately - not an objective measure existing independent from our experiences, expectations, values and cultural context. As such, a working concept of quality in early childhood care and education will need debate and agreement among the many stakeholders including and not least among parents.

The Centre will follow a model of consultation, which is inclusive and based on mutual respect. Shortly, we will establish an Advisory Council bringing together interested parties and expertise from across the early childhood care and education sector. Any development towards an agreed and coherent system of early childhood care and education will be based on existing practice in Ireland. While we want to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions, we cannot import and impose models, which make sense elsewhere but don't “fit” the needs of children in Ireland (here, I deliberately say children in Ireland and not Irish children).
So, at this stage of the Centre's development it may be of interest to you to hear a little about our immediate programme of work.



We have progressed work on two audit projects: an audit of relevant Irish research since 1990 which I expect to be our first publication in the first half of next year and an overview of existing provision for children experiencing disadvantage or with special needs.

We have also begun work on a conceptual framework of early childhood care and education in Ireland – this, as you can imagine, turns out to be quite a challenging task!

Some of our present work is in response to initiatives and developments elsewhere in the sector: The Minister has mentioned our participation in the National Childcare Coordinating Committee, our contribution to the review of the Childcare Regulations, our close cooperation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and our role in the preparation of the forthcoming OECD Report.

In addition to these activities we are actively involved in the Forum for Educational Disadvantage, the Éist Programme, the developing quality assurance programme of the Border Counties Childcare Network and other activities,

On request of the Department for Education and Science we have fast-tracked the preparation of proposals for the provision of early childhood education targeted at children experiencing disadvantage. We hope to submit these proposals by the end of the year.

And this, is only the beginning...

Our main reason to invite you here today is of course the launch of the Centre itself but as it happens we have a number of other milestones to celebrate:

Since the beginning of this month we have a working team of Development Officers in place in many ways reflecting the diversity of the sector. The buzz in the office is absolutely contagious!

We are also introducing our brand new “corporate identity” today and there are a couple of boards behind me to illustrate the logos and colour scheme. We have enjoyed great help from our partners, Creative Inc, in the process of designing the logo and I would like to thank Niall, Mel and Katie for their saintly patience and understanding.

Finally, we are about to move into our very own little house. You all have seen the Gate Lodge at the entrance to the College: that’s where you’ll find us in future.

All of this was only possible with a lot of help from many quarters. This support was generously and freely given and I wish to thank some people in particular without whom we would not be here today.

First of all I would like to acknowledge the support from the Minister as well as his predecessor and the Department.

Within the Department I would like to mention John Fanning and the Policy Unit – it has been a pleasure to work with him and his team.

I would like to thank the members of our Management Board and Steering Committee who have never wavered in their support for the project. This is also where the two colleges jointly manage the project and it is quite inspiring to see these two institutions with very different traditions work together in such a committed way.



Talking about the colleges, I would like to thank particularly the Management and staff of St. Patrick's College for the generous way the college has accommodated this new Centre. My special thanks here to Martin Ward the Bursar of St. Patrick's, who unfortunately cannot be here today.

Among the staff of the Centre I would like to single out Maureen Kelly and Elaine McCormack who have been running the Centre well before I appeared on the scene and who have also done a wonderful job in organizing today's event.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I thank all of you for the many expressions of good will and support I have encountered.

I would like to leave you with a quote by an Irish educator and teacher of young children who is better known as a freedom fighter and poet – Patrick Pearse. He tells the following story:

I knew a boy of whom his father said to me: 'He is not good at books, he is no good at work; he is good at nothing but playing the tin whistle. What am I to do with him?' I shocked the worthy man by replying (though really it was the obvious thing to reply): 'Buy a tin whistle for him'.



Main Logo and additional icons



Colour Scheme

