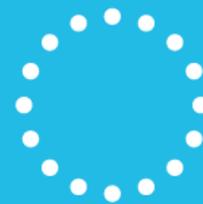


Early Childhood Research Special Interest Group Bulletin

Issue 7, July 2019



Children's
Research
Network

Welcome to the 7th Children's Research Network Early Childhood Research Group Bulletin!

The Early Childhood Research Group was established in 2015 as a Special Interest Group of the Children's Research Network. It was founded to give specific consideration to researching early childhood. The following vision was agreed by the group:

The Early Childhood Research Group is a collaborative space for the research community to share and disseminate research findings, promote quality practice and identify opportunities which will enrich understandings and improve the lives of young children.

While the founding members of the group are from the Early Childhood Care and Education field, the group benefits from a broader membership and scope of interest across early childhood research.

For further information, please contact:

CRN Research Coordinator:

Derina Johnson, childrensresearchnetwork@tcd.ie

OR

Early Childhood Research Group Chair:

Karen Higgins, karen@progressivecollege.ie

Events of Interest within Early Childhood

Upcoming events:

The Children's Research Network PhD Symposium "Doing research for and with children and young people" will take place on 28th August 2019 in NUI Galway. The Children's Research Network (CRN) and National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), in association with Trinity Research in Childhood Centre, Trinity College Dublin, are hosting a one-day PhD Symposium on August 28th 2019 for doctoral students

from all over the island of Ireland who are currently undertaking or have just completed research related to children and young people.

The **2019 OMEP Ireland Annual Research Conference** will take place on Saturday, 9th November 2019 at the Cork Institute of Technology. This year the conference theme is 'Relationships matter and what matters in Early Years Relationships'.

The **Researching Early Childhood Education Collaborative (RECEC) Conference on Early Childhood Education and Care** takes place on 20th November 2019 in Trinity College Dublin. The conference will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1st anniversary of the First Five Strategy.

Upcoming events in focus:

Revolutionising Education at Mary Immaculate College: A Right to Play and A Right to Voice

Prof Emer Ring, Dr Lisha O'Sullivan and Dr Maurice Harmon

Research continues to highlight the significant contribution of play-based practice to children's learning and development. Concerned that play opportunities across the education system remain under threat from perceived pressure to introduce more formal and directive approaches, the Centre for Early Childhood Research (CERAMIC) at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) in collaboration with the Children's Research Network held a conference 'Revolutionising Play: Perspectives; Possibilities and Promise' at MIC on September 15th 2018.

Photo: Conference Organising Committee with Prof Peter Gary, Boston College.



Following extensive positive feedback, MIC in collaboration with Queen's University, Belfast (QUB) and University College Cork (UCC) is hosting a sequel on October 5th 2019: 'Revolutionising Education through Play and Voice: Perspectives from Policy Research and Practice'. This conference is focused on the potential for 'play' and 'voice' to revolutionise our classrooms from early childhood to post-primary level. Keynote speakers include Prof Laura Lundy, QUB and Dr David Whitebread, formerly of Cambridge University. As we mark the 30th birthday of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Prof Lundy will explore the ways in which the right to play and the right to participate in decision-making are indivisible, inter-related and inter-dependent. Dr David Whitebread will review recent studies indicating that children learn most effectively through play and propose a new model of the mechanisms through which playful activities support children's growth as powerful and creative learners. Delegates will be provided with opportunities to explore a range of voice and play related topics including: The Power of Child Voice in the Classroom; Exploring the Possibilities of Play Beyond the Early Childhood Classroom in Primary and Post-Primary Settings; Innovative Ways of Harnessing Children's Voices in the Research Process and Play and Learning Outdoors in Education. The Corpus Christi Children's Choir, Corpus Christi Primary School, Moyross will close the conference with Dolores 'Dreams' and remind us, in the words of Dolores O'Riordan, of the possibilities inherent in promoting 'a different way to be' through play and voice in our early childhood and school contexts.

The conference is supported by Early Childhood Ireland (ECI); the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO); the LINC Programme; the National Childhood Network (NCN); the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA); AsIAm; ABC StartRight; The Teaching Council; Children in Hospital, Ireland; the National Parents' Council (Primary) and Shannon Region and Conference Sports' Bureau.

MIC, QUB and UCC look forward to welcoming you to Mary Immaculate College on October 5th next.

Recent events

CARN (Collaborative Action Research Network) Study Day: Doing Action Research in the Real World. This event aimed to build capacity and support services, schools and communities to engage in real world action research in collaboration with action research communities (June 18th, 2019).

Researching Early Childhood Education Collaborative (RECEC) hosted its final symposium in the early childhood education alignment series. The event, as with previous events, focused on the shared expertise and dialogue of participants, weaved through the day of presentations by Dr. Jaqualine Fallon, Professor Noírín Hayes, a keynote by Professor Emer Smyth, and an innovative panel discussion. The energy that existed throughout the entire symposium series persisted in this innovative discussion which highlighted the unique value and importance of relational and playful pedagogies in the early years of education, the importance of the recognition of the roles of educators in all settings and the value of such professional dialogues as those taking place at these symposia. The organisers would like to thank the participants for their input to these events. See video presentations, papers and more at <http://ecalignment.ie/>

Recent event in focus:

The State of Outdoor Play in Ireland in 2019 Symposium took place in the School of Education in Maynooth University on May 25th, 2019. It was hosted by Maynooth University Education Department and CEMEA France.

The outdoor play symposium was the culmination of a weeklong Erasmus plus research trip by CEMEA France examining outdoor play in four early childhood education and care services in Kildare. Their trips to services (arranged by Debbie Mullen of ECI) prompted us to consider what we have achieved for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of children in Ireland in the last hundred years.

"It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland"

Using the above commitment from the first democratic programme for government as a starting point, this symposium reflected on the early education, care, and rights of Ireland's youngest citizens in the 100 years since this commitment was made.

Morning keynote presentations were given by Dr. Thomas Walsh, MU Education Department, Dr. Leah O'Toole MU Froebel Department, and Carol Duffy, Early Childhood Ireland. Over 70 delegates then had an opportunity to engage with current research and practice at poster presentations. This was followed by an overview of the Erasmus plus project CEMEA France has been engaged in with five countries (including Ireland) across Europe and an interactive Q&A session about their research findings.

Parallel sessions followed lunch, where delegates chose from eight presentations, workshops, and learning stories from current practice and research in Ireland. This was followed by a keynote presentation which included provocations, questions, and ideas for contemplation by Christina Duff, Dublin City University (co-created with Dr. Jackie Bourke, University College Dublin).

The symposium then moved forward to a re-imagining of what outdoor play and learning could look like in the next 100 years. The delegates were tasked with discussing and reaching a consensus about what this re-imagining would look like and what it would take to get there. This culminated in the creation of a manifesto of 20 co-created commitments, in relation to outdoor play

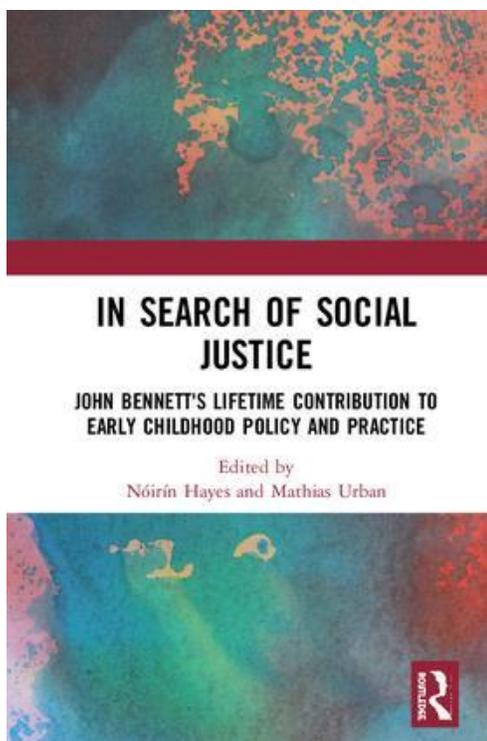
and its provision, to the children of Ireland for the next hundred years. The delegates then read out each commitment and placed it on the poster. The day ended with a signing of the manifesto by the remaining delegates. The manifesto, along with all the slides and photos from the day are available at [Outdoor Play - www.earlychildhoodprofessionalsirl.com](http://www.earlychildhoodprofessionalsirl.com)



Recent publications

Book: John Bennett's Lifetime Contribution to Early Childhood Policy and Practice.

A new book published on John Bennett's Lifetime Contribution to Early Childhood Policy and Practice. Edited by Nóirín Hayes, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and Mathias Urban, Dublin City University, Ireland. Commemorating the life and work of Dr John Bennett, his lifelong contribution to Early Childhood Education and Care, and his ongoing influence on policy, research and practice, *In Search of Social Justice* is a tribute to a preeminent scholar and his vision for an equitable and high-quality start for all children. This book draws on personal reflections, vignettes and testimonials from eminent authors who shared their professional lives with Bennett, to argue for the continued relevance of his approach and foreground his insistence that we must continue to shape policy and provision through inquiry, passion and persistence, to improve the early experiences of all young children.



Chapter: Rethinking Play as Pedagogy

Congratulations to Margaret O'Donoghue on the publication of her chapter: O Donoghue, M. (2019). The role of context within early childhood education in Ireland. In S. Alcock & N. Stobbs (Eds.) *Rethinking Play as Pedagogy*. Volume 4 in the series Thinking About Pedagogy in Early Education (Eds. A. Fleet & M. Reed).

Blog: Why is math talk so important?

Why is math talk so important? – written by Sandra O'Neill. This is a well-articulated and interesting blog post focusing on numeracy in ECEC, available at <https://medium.com/@omepireland>

Report: Strengthening Foundations of Learning programme

The **Final Evaluation Report for the Strengthening Foundations of Learning programme was published in March 2019**. This evaluation report addresses quality improvement in eight ECEC services. The initiative aimed to build the capacity and confidence of the early childhood educators [ECEs] through extensive continuing professional development over

three years, and, through this, to create a solid base for enhancing the learning of the young children attending the early childhood settings. The findings from this evaluation of the SFL model of CPD indicate that a collaborative community level programme, designed to link theory and practice through workshops and mentoring, sustained across an extended period of time, located within a clear curriculum framework and led by a small but expert team can have a visible and measurable impact on the pedagogical practice and the early learning environments of the children with whom they work. The findings from this Evaluation offer a very encouraging indication of the potential for the Strengthening Foundations of Learning model to impact positively on the professional identity, curriculum awareness, pedagogical practice and language of participating ECEC services.

Hayes, N., MacNamee, E., Rooney, T. and Irwin, J. (2019) Strengthening Foundations of Learning: Final Report. Dublin: Northside Partnership/Preparing for Life. Available at <https://www.preparingforlife.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/53034-NS-Partnership-Executive-Summary-LR2.pdf>

Photo: At the launch of the SFL evaluation report launch (left to right), Anne Quigley, Leah Russell, Níóirín Hayes, Emma Byrne MacNamee, Triona Rooney, and Niall Sexton



Resource: Mo Scéal: Moving from preschool to primary school

The transition from preschool to primary school is an important part of children's lives. Research on this transition by the NCCA has informed the development of a national resource, entitled Mo Scéal.

The research states that certain dispositions, skills and knowledge are important for children as they make the transition to school. Good communication skills, good social and emotional skills along with positive learning dispositions like independence, curiosity and resilience are key. Greater alignment in curriculum and pedagogy across preschools and primary schools is critical.

Supporting transitions should be a shared responsibility between children, families, communities, preschools and primary schools as focus is moving away from child readiness to ready schools. The transfer of information on children's learning and development between preschools and primary schools is an important part of the transition process (Murphy and O'Kane, 2016A and 2016B, O'Kane, 2016).

As part of Mo Scéal, and drawing on the research reports, NCCA has developed a suite of materials to support children's transition, including reporting templates. These are available on www.ncca.ie.

The research also emphasises the importance of relationships among and between the preschools, schools and families to support children. There is guidance available on building such relationships on the website too.

If you would like more information, please contact Dr Mary Daly, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) at mary.daly@ncca.ie

New Feature!

Meet the researcher

In each of our research bulletins, the ECRG will introduce readers to a member who is research active in the field.

Please contact us if you would like to be featured. We welcome contributions from both established and emerging researchers.

Meet Carol-Ann O'Sioráin



Hello Everyone,

My name is Carol-Ann O'Sioráin and I am a lecturer in education in the School of Education in Hibernia College. My role there is multi-faceted and allows me to showcase my experience in early childhood education, primary education and special education. I trained initially as a Montessori Teacher in St. Nicholas Montessori College, Ireland and during the final year of my training I secured a permanent post in a main stream primary school. This was the norm at the time. When Hibernia College launched the Higher Diploma in Primary Education, I decided to enhance my skills and I graduated with the second cohort of the first graduates.

During my career as a class teacher, I was seconded to the Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSP) as a DEIS Advisor and this provided me with a wonderful experience of supporting my teacher colleagues in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in literacy and numeracy. In 2009, I completed a Master in Education (Special Education) in The School of Education Trinity College, Dublin. This experience helped me to understand my role in the classroom and became a critical event in my career; **I realised my role as a teacher/researcher.**

My research interests in essence reflect my philosophy of and for education. I am fascinated by the role of language and communication and in particular how very young children and their carers make meaning together. As a teacher of children with autism, I became very

aware of the need to really understand how language in all its presentations could be interpreted. This led me to my research project for my PhD; 'An Inquiry into the Literacy Practice of Children with Autism in the Republic of Ireland'.

My Top Tips to early years practitioners and teachers working with children with autism:

- Stop and stand and stare, and listen to what the child is saying to us through their actions, verbal and non-verbal communications and their moments of quiet

- Tiny, Attainable, Tickable Targets (TATTS) – Reflect on practice and pick one small action to make a big change in practice for a better outcome

My teacher educator career to date has been very exciting and I am very proud of my initial and on-going teacher education. My current research project is at an early stage and is entitled 'An Exploration of the Expressed Educational Needs of Early Childhood Educators in Ireland'

Children's Research Network

Early Childhood Research Special Interest Group

This bulletin is produced by the Special Interest Group in Early Childhood Research of the Children's Research Network for Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Please feel free to share this bulletin, also available on the Network's website

www.childrensresearchnetwork.org

If you have items you would like included in the next bulletin or have any comments or questions, please contact Rhona McGinn, ECRG SIG Newsletter Guest Editor, childrensresearchnetwork@tcd.ie



About the Children's Research Network

The Children's Research Network is a members' organisation bringing together a broad range of professionals with an interest in research and evidence-based policy and practice for children and young people on the island of Ireland.

Member Benefits

Further your knowledge and keep up to date with research and developments with our workshops, seminars and conferences. Enjoy special discounted rates for members!

Publish and disseminate your research through our communication platforms, including the Children's Research Digest, our website, newsletters and social media

Collaborate with fellow professionals in your area of interest through our Special Interest Groups

Receive our electronic newsletter, containing announcements of CRN news and events, as well as relevant external notices, such as key resources, events, calls for papers and job offers

Join the Network

Membership fees

Student / unwaged €15/~£13*

Part-time employed / retired €20/~£17*

Full-time employed €30/~£26*

* Approx. Sterling conversion

Go to www.childrensresearchnetwork.org

Contact us at childrensresearchnetwork@tcd.ie