



Enriched Curriculum

What is the Enriched Curriculum?

The Enriched Curriculum is being piloted in over 100 schools across Northern Ireland. It brings together all aspects of good early years practice, alongside the key learning areas, with a focus on the personal, social and emotional developmental needs of children. The programme is about enriching the learning environment to create enthusiastic, highly motivated, successful learners who are supported in their learning by sensitive, knowledgeable and skilful adults.

Will a child be missing out by not receiving the traditional formal teacher-directed approach to reading, writing and maths?

Children learn at different rates and in different ways, not all children are ready or able to enter into the process of sitting for long periods of time. Until they can listen well and concentrate for periods of time, they are not ready for more formal learning. Play is the vehicle for learning which provides positive attitudes and encourages both motivation and perseverance. Children will not be held back from learning, each child will be encouraged to progress at their own pace without feeling pressure to compete with others in the class. In this way they are more confident and better prepared to work independently. The research findings now recognise that attitudes and skills need to be developed in order for effective learning to take place.

Speech and language development is the basis of all learning and teachers provide opportunities for talking and listening through well-planned play, circle time, 'show and tell', story-time and music and rhymes.

As children develop early literacy skills, they will move on to more focused reading and writing activities when teachers judge they are ready.

Just because a child has not been given a "reading book" or is not "doing sums" does not mean that they are not learning.

What kind of activities might be found in an enriched curriculum classroom?

The classroom may contain a writing and book area, sand, water, role play, puppet theatre, listening centre, use of the computer, creative area, dough, table top activities, and musical instruments. These encourage children to explore, be creative, work independently and co-operatively.

Teachers support and extend children's learning by providing a balance of well-planned play opportunities which promote learning. There are six areas of learning defined in the curriculum:

- **Personal development**

The children will have opportunities to develop their social skills and to understand their emotions.

Circle Time is an activity for the whole class which promotes growth in personal development enables children to share information and participate in activities.

This experience helps build self-esteem and enables children to take turns and to be respectful of one another.

- **The arts**

Being creative comes into all aspect of the curriculum. Children have opportunities to be creative as they take part in role play, dance, music and art and design activities.

- **Language and literature**

Literacy experiences are occurring, in a meaningful way to children through for example: shared reading and writing, access to a large variety of books in the classroom and through writing opportunities.

- **Mathematics and numeracy**

Taking part in practical maths activities encourages children to think and to discuss what they are doing in their mathematics. Mental maths is developed through counting activities and regular classroom routines.

- **Physical development and movement**

Balance and co-ordination is promoted through regular outdoor/indoor play. Having opportunities to develop hand to eye co-ordination are important to aid writing skills.

- **The world around us**

This area of learning covers geography, history, science and technology.

Practical experiences and topics which start with what are of interest to the child promote exploration and stimulate curiosity and discussion.

Do children still have homework?

Parents are informed about how to support their child and an induction meeting provides the opportunity for teachers to share the home learning approach to activities taken home and build upon what is happening at school. Books go home on a regular basis and parents are asked to discuss the book with their children and share ideas and enjoy the shared reading. Children take home an ideas sheet which accompanies a range of activities that may include dice, number cards, sorting pieces, nursery rhymes, a beanbag – items that children are familiar with in school.

What are the outcomes of the Enriched Curriculum?

Research from Queens University Belfast confirms that children at the end of Year 3 are achieving good progress in reading, writing and maths without experiencing any sense of struggle or failure. In addition the gap between boy's and girl's attainment has narrowed.

How can I find out more?

Contact your Education and Library Board; speak to someone from the Primary Years Team:

Belfast Education and Library Board Telephone	028 90564082
Western Education and Library Board Telephone	028 82411335
North-Eastern Education and Library Board Telephone	028 25662382
South-Eastern Education and Library Board Telephone	028 90566281
Southern Education and Library Board Telephone	028 37512520

This fact sheet is based on the information from 'Enriched Curriculum: The Beginning' Belfast Education and Library Board, EYE. Volume 5 No 12 April 2004 and CCEA leaflet on 'Early Years The Enriched Curriculum' produced in collaboration with the five Education and Library Boards.