**Helpful Early Child Development Vocabulary**

**Active learning** involves children learning by doing, using their senses to explore and work with the objects and materials around them. Through these experiences, children develop the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding that will help them to grow as confident and competent learners.

**Assessment** is the ongoing process of collecting, documenting, reflecting on, and using information to develop rich pictures of children as learners in order to support and enhance their future learning.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactive disorder (ADH**D) is a developmental disorder characterized by distractibility, impulsive behaviors and the inability to stay focused on tasks or activities.

**Autistic spectrum disorder** is a developmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and unusual, repetitive behaviors, or severely limited interests and activities. These behaviors can range in impact from mild to disabling.

**Child-initiated activities** involve children having the opportunity to follow a particular interest or to be involved in deciding to do a particular activity.

**Cognition** is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses.

**Curriculum** refers to all the experiences, formal and informal, planned and unplanned in the indoor and outdoor environment, which contribute to children’s learning and development.

**Development** is the process by which a person changes and grows over time, influenced by both experiences and physiological changes. It has two dimensions: normative which follows a prescribed pattern and dynamic which depends on time and experience.

**Disability** refers to a physical, sensory or psychological impairment that can create challenges for children in taking part in everyday activities. Specific levels of learning disability have been classified (mild general learning disability, moderate general learning disability, severe/profound general learning disability).

**Early childhood** is the period that extends from birth to six years

**Emergent literacy** is concerned with children developing a growing understanding of print and language asa foundation for reading and writing. Through play and

hands-on experiences children see and interact with print as they build an awareness of its functions and conventions.

**Emergent speech** refers to all the sounds that children make to communicate from birth, including babbling,

gurgling and words.

**Hands-on experiences** provide opportunities for children to touch, taste, smell, hear, see and do as they explore social, physical and imaginary worlds.

**Higher-order thinking skills** involve manipulating ideas and information. These skills include problem solving, predicting, critiquing, analyzing, questioning, and justifying. Lower order thinking skills include remembering and learning facts.

**Intrinsic** is belonging naturally or essential.

**Invented spelling** refers to children’s attempts to spell, using the sound of the word (phonetic spelling). It is the practice of encouraging and facilitating beginning writers to write and spell as they want. The act of writing is more important than the correct spelling. Eventually the child will learn and use the correct form of spelling.

**Latent development** is present but not visible, apparent, or actualized; existing as potential: **latent** ability

**Learning** is a complex, dynamic and interactive process whereby knowledge, skills and attitudes are created through experience. Formal learning consists of learning experiences, which have been planned for the child. Informal learning occurs on a continuous basis as the child interacts with the environment.

**Literacy** is more than having the ability to read and write. It is about helping children to communicate with others and to make sense of the world. It includes oral and written language and other sign systems such as mathematics, art, sound, pictures, Braille, sign language and music. Literacy also acknowledges the changing

Nature of information communication technology and the many forms of representation relevant to children including screen-based (electronic games, computers, the internet, television).

**Meta-cognitive skills** are used by children to think about their own learning. This can involve children remembering, reflecting on their work and the usefulness of their current strategies for a particular task or activity. It includes the ability to evaluate and to think about thinking.

**Milestone** is an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development.

**Moral** is concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character.

**Motivation** is the act or an instance of **motivating**, or providing with a reason to act in a certain way

**Motor skill** is a function, which involves the precise movement of muscles with the intent to perform a specific act. Most purposeful movement requires the ability to "feel" or sense what one's muscles are doing as they perform the act.

**Pedagogy** refers to all the practitioner’s actions or work in supporting children’s learning and development. It infers a negotiated, respectful and reflective learning experience for all involved.

**Pre-reading or early reading skills** include those developed in young children, which support the emergence of literacy. Such skills include knowing basic terminology and conventions in English and Irish books—author and illustrator, predicting the story from the pictures, going from left to right and from top to bottom, turning pages in sequence, using page numbers to locate a story and drawing attention to action words.

**Primary school** is the setting children of school going age attend.

**Primary School Curriculum** is the curriculum used in all primary schools in Ireland. It was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and launched in 1999. It is presented in 6 curriculum areas comprising 11 subjects. The NCCA reviews the curriculum on an on-going basis.

**Problem solving** refers to children’s ability to overcome obstacles that they meet while playing and undertaking activities. A problem-solving approach in the context of social conflicts, involves asking children what happened or what the problem is, restating the problem, helping children to find a solution, providing subsequent support and ensuring all involved are supported, comforted and reassured.

**Pro-social behavior** describes any action that benefits another individual. The behaviors include helping, comforting and sharing. It involves the ability to connect with others in a meaningful way.

**Scaffolding** describes the process by which adults (and more capable peers) support and guide children’s learning, enabling children to reach the next level of ability, beyond their own personal capability at that particular time. Scribe is the role played by adults or older children when they model writing by recording on paper children’s own words, and then reading back to the children what they said. Sensory impairment refers to a problem with the visual and auditory senses

**Spatial awareness** involves children being aware of themselves and their bodies in space and knowing they can move themselves and objects. Spatial skills include fitting things together and taking them apart, lining things up, surrounding or containing things, building, filling and emptying, looking at things from different physical perspectives, being able to recognize distance in two dimensional images, such as photos or paintings. This helps children understand concepts like over/under, near/far, up/down, and in/out.

**Special educational** need refers to a limitation in the ability of a person to benefit from or participate in education due to a continuing sensory/physical/learning disability, mental health or other condition.

**Special education settings** are developed specifically to support children with special educational needs. The settings include special schools, special classes, special units, and resource rooms.

**Thinking skills** include questioning (babies having their curiosity interpreted by attentive adults, and when older asking questions); making connections (between people, places and things); reasoning (working things out and later explaining); evaluating (reviewing what they learned or have done); problem-solving (the learner recognizing something can be changed and that they have the ability to do it), and creative thinking (seeing many different ways of doing, exploring, discovering, finding out about the world).

<http://www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/PrinciplesThemes_ENG/Glossary_ENG.pdf>