



## **Pedagogical report of the Irish workshops**

**October 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

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### THE EVEIL PROJECT

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EVEIL is an international project organized by six European partners and financed by the program COMENIUS of the European Union.

The EVEIL project helps young children with visually impairment get a better access to reading and writing, to books, newspapers and other sources of information. Improving the literacy of visually impaired children will help them take part in society more effectively and with greater ease, and fully enjoy culture as well as become independent and responsible European citizens.

The project aims on creating a network of professionals in the field of pre-reading activities for blind and partially sighted children.

Work package 6 was focused on helping parents to support their children in learning to read and to do so with the richness and imaginative scope available to fully sighted children. The workshops were therefore aimed at offering a range of strategies to parents for reading with their children and engaging in a range of wider activities that would increase their child's motivation, enjoyment and breadth of understanding in approaching literature. The work package involved two partners, in Germany and Ireland, who were working with different populations and consequently developed distinctive approaches to the task. In Germany, DBSV worked with blind children in conjunction with the Schloss-Schule Ilvesheim to show parents how to produce materials for developing the tactile awareness of blind children, including tactile books. In Ireland, NCBI work mainly with partially sighted children and their development work concentrated on the wider issues of confidence building and motivation rather than the more technical issue of pre-braille activities. Although the partners followed different paths, each responding to the parents with whom they were involved, the ideas and activities that were developed complemented each other.

### THE EVALUATION OF NEEDS

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Report «Parental support in the development of reading by vision impaired children»

NCBI devised a questionnaire for parents to identify the extent to which they read themselves, had newspapers or books in the home, whether they bought books or borrowed them from libraries, encouraged their children to read and spent time with them looking at books. This provided partners with a baseline of knowledge about the level of reading and pre-reading activity that children experienced and this gave some indication of where children and parents would benefit from support.

Both DBSV and NCBI were concerned to provide a rationale to parents for the activities that they were developing and this rationale was based in the cognitive development of children and the central role of reading in this development. DBSV, working with parents of blind children, were focused primarily on the difference between the development of concepts by blind children and by fully sighted children; the need for direct tactile experience by blind children to compensate for the lack of sight as a distance receptor. This was not, however, their only concern and DBSV also emphasized the need for promoting independence in negotiating the environment. NCBI was working mainly with parents of partially sighted children and based their workshop activities on a broader framework of inter-related cognitive and social development, emphasising the need to encourage self-confidence as a foundation for independent learning by children.

The survey of parents and the work on conceptual development provided an understanding of the kind of support that would benefit parents in helping their children learn to read.

## I- PREPARATION OF THE WORKSHOPS

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### II-1 PREPARATORY MEETINGS

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Work package 6 was organized by four individuals in four different locations; Berlin, Dublin, Cork and the UK.

This presented co-ordination problems that were resolved by a visit to Berlin by NCBI; a visit to Dublin by DBSV, teleconferencing and regular visits to Dublin by NCBI staff based in Cork and the UK.

The purpose of meetings was to plan the questionnaire for a survey of parents reading habits, final editing of the report on the survey, plans for the workshops and, in Ireland, detailed editing of the video record of the workshop..

#### 2010

February	17 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup>	GD & EH
May	20 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup>	GD &EH
June	17 <sup>th</sup>	Teleconference
July	22 <sup>nd</sup>	GD & EH
September	13 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup>	CL & EH
October	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup>	Berlin
October	14 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup>	EH & CL
October	20 <sup>th</sup>	EH, CL, GD
November	9 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup>	EH & CL
November	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Interviews
December	1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup>	GD & EH

#### 2011

June	8 <sup>th</sup>	
June	28 <sup>th</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting DBSV Dublin
September	26 <sup>th</sup>	
October	19 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup>	
November	19 <sup>th</sup>	

## II-2 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

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The schedule for Saturday 26th of November was:

### 11am to 12.00pm

Parents and children arrived and were introduced to one another. They had an opportunity to become familiar with the layout of the space we planned to use over the two days. Refreshments were provided and the children settled in.

### 12.00pm to 1.00pm

Parents viewed a presentation outlining:

- The timetable of events planned for the two days
- Information about Project EVEIL
- Results of the interviews carried out collaboratively between the partners
- Objectives for Workshops in Ireland
- Information on concept development (See further attachment)
- Implications for children with vision impairment
- The importance of acquiring information available through images and its relationship with the narrative

### 12.00pm to 1pm

Separately the children got to know each other better and then listened to a story. Discussion about the story happened during and after the reading. The children were encouraged to elaborate on the vocabulary used and were encouraged to bring their own experience to the session.

### 1pm to 2pm

Lunch

### 2pm to 3pm

- Parents took part in a workshop on how to create an audio book using power point.
- The children read story books provided for them to prepare for recording into audio format.

### 3pm to 3.15pm

Break

### 3.15pm to 4pm

The parents and children worked together to make an audio version of a storybook. They produced this on a CD to take home with them.

### 4pm to 4.30pm

Parents and children took part in art and craft activities loosely based around the concepts explored in the story of "The Snail and the Whale" including:

Water - sources, properties, functions, etc.

Sealife – dolphins, crabs, starfish, snails etc.

Natural environment features – caves, rocks, icebergs etc.

### 4.30pm to 5.15pm

Parents and children listened to an extract from "*George's marvellous medicine*" by Roald Dahl. A game followed where the children were given cards with an ingredient printed/brailled from the medicine created in the story. A large two handled pot like the one used in the story was provided. The children listened to the ingredient called out and had to check their cards to see if they had it. The child threw the card with the correct ingredient into the pot and stirred it up to recreate the making of George's marvellous medicine.

Samples of some of the ingredients used in the story were provided to the children. They then had to try to match the cards with the ingredient based on smell and/or touch. A discussion about the types of containers that the products come in was also facilitated.

### 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Dinner

Schedule for 27th November

### 10am to 12pm

Parents of children with low vision listened to a presentation about assessing functional vision. It included information on central and peripheral vision, contrast and colour sensitivity as well as glare and lighting issues. Practical examples of everyday activities to observe were provided along with suggestions to probe in a non-threatening manner for expanding knowledge about what the child can or cannot see.

Meanwhile the children with low vision took part in further structured experiential learning activities through art and crafts with NCBI staff. The vocabulary and language used during this session was a repetition of and expansion on what was used the previous day in order to re enforce the understanding of any new concepts learned.

The parents of children with no vision went to the pool for a water based session. The pool session was based on concepts emerging through the story of the snail and the whale (Julia Donaldson). The children were actively involved in creating waves, swimming into underwater caves, as well as imitating the sounds and movements of dolphins, birds, monkeys, turtles, sharks, boats and of course the hero of the story the snail. It was directed and facilitated by 4 instructors of the Halliwick method of swim instruction. NCBI staff and some parents also assisted as required in the session. Parents not going into the pool observed the session.

The children with low vision and their parents then took part in the swim session while the children with no vision and their parents did a joint arts and crafts activity session similar to the one described above.

#### 12.15pm to 1pm

Snack

#### 1pm -2pm

Drama session, parents and children together but divided into two groups.

This session was based on the story "*A new home for a pirate*" by Ronda Armitage & Holly Swain. It served as a supplementary learning experience to the story time session where the theme of the water, helping others and the search for new experiences was played out through a story about a pirate who longs to live on land.

The story's narrator also played the main character "Jed". Jed is a pirate but doesn't enjoy it. He finds the ship cramped and he suffers from sea sickness. So he tells his family that he is leaving because he wants to live in a house. The children actively took part in the session as they were given an item that may be required in the story. The children had to guess what solutions might help the pirate when he is in trouble and describe how that item could be used to help.

Following the story the children played a game together, taking part in modifying materials for a "set" following rules and interpreting spatial concepts.

#### 2.00pm

Dinner, parents ate separately to the children to facilitate an opportunity for better peer discussion.



3.00pm

Close of workshop, q&a session, feedback.

Children were supervised for free play activities.

### II-3 COOPERATION AND ATTITUDE OF PEDAGOGUES

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There was close co-operation between colleagues who already knew each other and some of whom already worked together. There was mutual support throughout the workshop with colleagues getting involved in the full range of activities, either leading the activity or working with individual children and parents.

### II-4 COOPERATION AND ATTITUDE OF THE PARENTS

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Parents were all volunteers who had been contacted through the regional network of NCBI staff and so they were positive about coming to the workshop.

At the workshop the parents enjoyed sharing experiences and were pleased to see their children making friends with other vision impaired children. There was a strong sense of a common pursuit with parents taking responsibility for making activities succeed.

## II- PARTICIPANTS OF THE WORKSHOPS

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The parents and children participating were:

Name	Age	Parent/s	Sibling/s
R. Collins	7	P. Collins	
J. O Neill	7	R. O Neill	
T. Toher Wefer	7	G. Toher	
S. Earley	6	M. Earley	Sister 1
C. O Toole	6	C O Toole D. O Toole	Sister 1 Brother 1
L. Kovaci	6	R Kovaci C. Kovaci	
C. Monaghan	6	C Monaghan D Monaghan	Sister 1
C. Francis	6	C. Francis T. Francis	Sister 1
E. Murphy	6	G. Murphy T. Murphy	

Sunday 26/11/2011 10am to 3.30pm

Name	Age	Parent/s	Sibling/s
R. Collins	7	P. Collins	
J. O Neill	7	R. O Neill	
T. Toher Wefer	7	G. Toher	
S. Earley	6	M. Earley	Sister 1
C. O Toole	6	C O Toole D. O Toole	Sister 1 Brother 1
L. Kovaci	6	R Kovaci	

		C. Kovaci	
C. Monaghan	6	C Monaghan D Monaghan	Sister 1
C. Francis	6	C. Francis T. Francis	Sister 1
E. Murphy	6	G. Murphy T. Murphy	

### III- IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKSHOPS

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#### IV-1 CALENDAR OF IMPLEMENTATION

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NCBI organised a single residential workshop on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2011

#### IV-2 TEAM INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

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##### Project Team

Elaine Howley

Caroline Lane

Gordon Dryden

##### Additional staff for workshop

Caiman Fox

Hilary Casey

Aideen Traynor

Sharon Lyons

Trevor Lyons

##### Swimming Instructors

Mary Langan

Ursula Barrett

Gail Murphy

Brid Brown

#### IV-3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKSHOPS

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Parents and children settled in well, the layout of the space being occupied served to ensure the children were safe and secure while also able to travel freely to the parents if required. This only occurred once during the initial separation of parents from children. The staff to children ratio was high throughout approximately 6:14.

## Initial Presentation

- The bulk of the initial presentation dealt with explaining what we mean by concept development, the natural acquisition of concepts and the implications for children with vision impairments.
- The story of “The snail and the whale” was introduced with images shown from the book. Sample slides were shown which listed concepts used in the language of the narrative and those that were represented through images on a particular page as outlined below:

- Animals/characters:

**Narrative:** Humpback Whale, Snail

**Image:** Seagulls (flying and eating fish, perched on drift wood), cat (sat on the dock, eyeing a seagull)

- Nature:

**Narrative:** Rock, sea, soot, dock

**Image:** Blue sky, bottles, barrels, driftwood, fish skeleton (pollution, washed up at shoreline), sand, shells, calm sea, smoke (coming out of boats), rust (on ship), cliff.

- Objects:

**Narrative:** Ships

**Image:** Houses, ladder (from dockside to water), lighthouse, cargo, buoy, large ship (name written on side, anchor, crane on board, cargo containers) smaller boats (contents)

- Actions:

**Narrative:** Slithering, itching, gazing, sniffed, sighed, sail

**Image:** Sailing, docked, plotting? (cat), smiling (snail)

- Spatial & other concepts:

**Narrative:** Tiny, great big, deep, wide, black sea

**Image:** Distance (sea, boats, cliffs), size comparisons (ships, boats, houses, containers)

- Parents were encouraged not only to ensure that their children are made aware of what is displayed visually but also to test that understanding and particularly the vocabulary being used. Further explanation of this was provided with slides demonstrating examples of multiple usages of words such as:
  - **Dock:** Meaning: Waterfront, (actually the water next to a pier or wharf)  
It is a **noun**, also known as:
    - waterfront-harbour-jetty-pier-quay-marina-lock-wharf  
Can also be used as a **verb**;
  - **To dock:** Meaning: To be held securely

- attach-moor-fasten-secure-stay-tie
- Other uses:
  - Dock in a courtroom
  - Dock your wage
  - Sleeping in the dock

### **Story time sessions**

“*The snail and the whale*” by Julia Donaldson and an extract from “*George’s marvellous medicine*” by Roald Dahl were read over the course of the weekend. The reading of the stories was supplemented by questions addressed to and invited comments from the children during and after the sessions.

For example with “**The snail and the whale**”:

- “I wonder what is going to happen next.” (The children’s assumptions were teased out along with problem solving strategies)
- “What do you think snails like to eat?” (Exploration of the food chain took place, what animals eat snails etc.)
- “How do you think the whale is feeling?” (Expansion of vocabulary; questions asked such as “can you think of another word for “scared””)
- “Have you ever travelled on a boat?” (The children were asked to describe it, use past experience to compare its characteristics to boats the others children could relate to)
- “What was the sea like? rough and choppy, calm?” The influence of different weather types, other water sources like rivers, lakes, ponds, were explored)

Attempts were made to explain the vocabulary/concepts that the children had difficulty understanding during the session when possible and notes were made for further activities/discussion to supplement the learning experience in order to assist the children in understanding these concepts.



## Workshop on creating an audio version of a book

During the interviews, parents reported that they often found it difficult to engage their child's interest when working on independent reading tasks. They sought strategies and ideas on making this activity more fun. The objective of the workshop therefore is to help parents to support their children with independent reading.

- The parents were provided with instruction on how to design a power point presentation, how to scan images and record a narrative. Separately, the children were introduced to a new text and asked to read it. Support was provided to help the children overcome any new or difficult words. Books in accessible format and reading aids were provided. The children had an opportunity to read the story once, then follow and read along silently as it was being read to them. They then joined their parents to record the narrative.



The children and parents were intrigued with this innovative way of shared and independent reading.

The children's interest was substantially held during the actual recording session. They were entertained by listening back to their own voice and some did more than one recording. The children were eager to make attempts at refining their reading skills and improve on reading speed with further reading and recordings. The process encouraged repetition and helped the children acquire new and difficult words, adding to existing vocabulary stores.

All parents were positive about this approach despite the lack of knowledge for some of computer use. Some parents suggested that this could be an ideal gift that their child could make for another child or family member. The parents were

advised to encourage their children to become more involved over time in creating audio books independently. Parents were advised that local assistive technology staff within NCBI would be made available for further support where necessary. One parent revealed that that the reading session provided a great opportunity for the spouse to observe their child's performance as work commitments generally prevented this from happening. It was felt by the parent that a shared understanding of their child's needs and abilities took place.

The process also helped to introduce the valuable role that technology can play in helping to make print more accessible to people with vision impairment.



### **Arts and crafts Sessions**

These took place throughout the weekend to supplement the children's learning of concepts being explored through the stories. The children enjoyed these practical sessions immensely and they provided a great opportunity for social play. Examples of activities that took place were as follows:

- Experimenting with water and sponges to demonstrate how much water it can hold before dripping out.
- Ice: Using ice cubes/shapes to recreate floating icebergs, experience temperature, experiment by placing different objects on them to see what happens.



- Making salty water: Add salt/sugar to water, talk about what happens to the solids, dissolve, and allow tasting if willing.
- Floating foam sealife. Children make octopus, starfish, shark etc. with hot glue and make them float!
- Creating a slimy trail like a snail! Using water and icing sugar, Try to draw some letters or write a word. (use stylus for Braille)
- Making a cave, using blankets, chairs, sheets, boxes, put the children into groups to work together on making caves/cubbies. Talk about why we all need shelters, the different types of homes people can have.
- Hands on session with live snails! Discussion about characteristics, habitat etc.
- Pretend play animals: Snail, Lie on tummy, move around on the floor without using hands or legs only tummy muscles. Crab Walk, Sit down, take weight on hands and feet and walk backwards, forwards and sideways.



## **Pool Session**

Some parents went into the pool with their children while others observed from the side of the pool. Staff from NCBI and swim instructors from the National adapted physical activity centre assisted the other children.

The session was directed and facilitated by 4 instructors of the Halliwick method of swim instruction. The Halliwick concept was developed to teach people to swim and become independent in water with an emphasis on happiness and safety. This is done through the ten-point program that was first developed by James McMillan over 50 yrs ago and has been constantly progressing and improving since. The ten points see a process of development through mental adjustment, balance control and movement which leads to personal independence in the water. These concepts are the essential components of motor learning.

A lesson plan was devised by group leader Mary Downes based on concepts emerging through the story of the snail and the whale (Julia Donaldson). The children were actively involved in creating waves, pretending to swim into underwater caves, as well as imitate sounds and movements of dolphins, birds, monkeys, turtles, sharks, boats and of course the hero of the story the snail.

This session went beyond our expectations in helping the children to understand and experience difficult concepts. It was possible for them to more effectively mimic many animal movements in the water that we didn't fully appreciate at the planning stage. For example: an eagle spreading his wings and flying. The water provided an excellent environment to experience how a bird can hover and fly.



### **Presentation on Assessing Functional Vision**

Following the interviews that took place with all partner countries, it was revealed that some parents seemed very knowledgeable about the functional effects of vision loss on their child. Their feedback about strategies being used to overcome difficulties demonstrated the importance of sharing such content among other parents. However, many parents reported having little confidence in their ability to understand and interpret what their child can/cannot see. Typical responses suggested that parents relied heavily on acuity measurements from the ophthalmologist and offered varied explanations on the understanding of clinic results.

It is clearly understood by parents of children with no vision that there is a need for them to provide description, added commentary and practical experience in order to fill in the information that the child is missing visually. The challenge for parents is in knowing the best method of delivery for this type of information. For parents of children with some remaining vision the situation is somewhat different. The parents

are often unsure what amount of information is gathered by the child and consequently how much additional information they need to fill in.

The emphasis here was to ensure that parents of children with low vision have a good understanding of the information and language used at ophthalmic assessments as well as being able to interpret their own observations of their child. It was explained that our aim was to enable the parents to have a better understanding of what the likely implications will be for their child and when and how intervention may or may not be required on an everyday basis.

This session gave practical suggestions and advice on helping children to interpret narrative and content represented through pictures. Parents were urged to be aware that their child may report that he/she sees something in order to please the parent or fit in with sighted peers. Many felt that this was the case and as a consequence led them to feel confused about what may or may not be seen. Parents were advised on strategies that could be used to gather more information from their child about what they see without making the child feel inadequate. For example when trying to assess the child's vision for intermediate distance tasks from about 16 inches to 3 feet:

- Observe the child while watching TV/playing computer games, finding something in the fridge, reading the clock, pictures on the wall etc.
- Observe the child's reactions to facial expressions/gestures, across the table during meals
- ✓ Note the working distance, reading/reaction speed, colour contrast and lighting conditions

### **Drama Session**

This session was based on the story "A new home for a pirate" by Ronda Armitage & Holly Swain. It served as a supplementary learning experience to the story time session where the theme of the water, helping others and the search for new experiences is played out through a story about a pirate who longs to live on land.

- The story's narrator played the main character "Jed".  
*Jed is a pirate but doesn't enjoy it. He finds the ship cramped and he suffers from sea sickness. So he tells his family that he is leaving because he wants to live in a house. Jed goes on his adventure and encounters some characters in need of assistance along the way.*



The children actively took part in the story as they were given an item that may be required in the story. The children had to guess what solutions might help the pirate when he is in trouble and describe how that item could be used to help. The story was read aloud and paused at each point where Jed meets someone in need of help, a bird who lost her nest, a sheep stuck in a bush, a dog with a broken leg, a farmer whose bull is loose in the field etc.

When the story was paused, the children were asked to think of a way that their item might help. They were asked to represent their idea placing it in the context of the story by using actions and words. The story continued, revealing the correct item required.

The children had the opportunity to represent parts of the story using sound, voice and movement. They played together as a team, followed rules, and made suggestions. The children used listening skills and were encouraged to retell the story using their own language as well as new vocabulary. It helped the children to order events, explore themes and characters through improvisation and role play. The children concentrated on understanding and interpreting the text and made predictions. The drama session helped to show the children's understanding of ideas, events and characters and reveal imaginative links to their own experiences.

Following this a pirate game took place in which the children had to pretend to be pirates on board a ship. They followed instructions such as:

- Port! Move to the left
- Starboard! Move to the right
- Forward! Move to the front
- Aft! Move to the back
- Scrub the decks! Down on your knees miming scrubbing deck
- Captain's coming! Stand tall and salute

The space on board was made smaller and smaller as the game went on in order to recreate the cramped conditions that Jed felt ("a tight squeeze") on board the ship.

The children enjoyed this session as it allowed so much free play and fun. They became involved in putting together materials to use to create the ship and invited their parents to take part also. Once again the understanding of concepts was tested during this game and new vocabulary was repeated and re enforced.



## **Feedback session**

Parents were invited to comment on the activities, presentations, practical workshops, venue and overall experience for them and their children. The response was overwhelming positive and many parents gave specific examples of what was most useful.

- Not taking for granted that their child sees/understands something
- Meeting other parents for peer support
- Children meeting others with sight loss
- The implications for learning and development when concept development is delayed or misunderstood
- The amount of learning potential in a simple story
- Strategies to strengthen the understanding of difficult concepts





## IV- THE TOOLS

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Members of the Project team and the additional staff are all education or social care professionals and as a normal working practice exchange views on the progress of activities. In addition to this ongoing process, at most periods during the workshops, while one or two members of the Project team were involved in the activities with children, one member was able to observe activities and provide feedback to colleagues.

The residential nature of the workshops enabled staff to dine with parents after the first day and to receive informal feedback. At the end of the second day there was a more formal session where parents were able to comment on what they found to be helpful and what new understanding they felt they had achieved,

The whole of the two days was filmed.

### IV-1 METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION

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The workshop was filmed by Denver James Studio using two cameras, often simultaneously. This produced 18 hours of video recording which was subsequently given a rough edit by Denver James Studio but then edited in detail by the Project team over the following months. This involved writing and recording the narration, commissioning background music and deciding the final shape of the video material; a process that involved a lengthy discussion at a number of meetings.

### IV-2 VIDEOS

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The video is attached

A  
*denver* JAMES Studios Ltd  
Production



for



Working for People with Sight Loss

The National Council for the Blind of Ireland

## Introduction

- Funded by the Comenius programme
- Developing ways to enrich the reading experience of visually impaired children

### IV-3 GOOD PRACTICES ...

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The workshop demonstrated how opportunities to explore language and associated concepts could be drawn from children's stories.

The session using IT to record books was motivational, arousing the interest of children in reading rather than focusing on the process of improving reading skills.

The stories were used to encourage practical activity, widening the experience of children and helping them to relate the imaginary world of books to the world around them.

The workshop sessions illustrated for parents how practical experience, such as handling snails, could enrich the process of reading and the corollary of that process where a book, "The Snail and the Whale" can be a trigger for practical activity like swimming. The two way relationship between reality and a world of the imagination is important to the development of reading.

## V- EVALUATION

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### V-1 GENERAL EVALUATION

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The Project team and additional staff naturally tried to adopt an observer role as well as being participants, which allowed an ongoing professional critique of the workshop as it happened but the video material made possible a more accurate understanding of the processes that occurred during the workshop, making it easier to identify successful activities and to recognise activities that could be followed up or improved.

### V-2 IMPACT ON PARENTS

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The small population of Ireland, which is largely rural, means that the parents who came to the workshop were isolated from other parents with vision impaired children. They did not have a support network of other parents in the same situation and relied on NCBI's regional services for support. The workshop provided an opportunity for them to discuss issues between themselves; how to balance attention between a vision impaired child and siblings; how to argue for additional support in school and how to find opportunities for social activities for their child. Parents valued the opportunity to meet other parents and there was a determination to maintain contact with each other as a mutual support group.

There were practical benefits from ideas that they could take away such as making audio books. There was also a wide recognition of the need for patience in supporting their children, articulated very clearly by one father.

### V-3 IMPACT ON CHILDREN

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At several points parents commented on the fact that their children had not met other children with similar eye conditions and that this experience had boosted their self-confidence. They were no longer "different". Some of the children bonded very closely with each other and it is probable that, if parents keep in touch, these friendships will continue'

The children were enthusiastic about recording audio books but it is not possible to assess at this stage how far that is a response to the novelty of making the recordings.

Several of the children, who were timid about going into the swimming pools, lost all their fear and played very confidently in the water.

#### V-4 IMPACT ON THE TEAM INVOLVED

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The project team was helped by a number of colleagues who shared a number of observations.

All the parents were already doing a good job of supporting their children and the workshop helped everyone to gain some new ideas and new approaches.

Staff recognised how much more effectively they could encourage the children in a range of activities when working as a team in groups. This poses a logistical challenge given the demography of Ireland.

#### V-5 WEAK POINTS FOR THE PEDAGOGUES TEAM

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In relation to the workshop itself, there were too many activities planned for the available time.

In the longer term there are problems in following up the workshop with such a dispersed group of participants. Nevertheless, it is important to continue networking parents and children for mutual support using NCBI's regional staff teams.

#### V-6 STRONG POINTS FOR THE PEDAGOGUES TEAM

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The Project team at NCBI believe very strongly that a child can only enter a rich imaginary world of literature if they have a body of direct experience to draw upon and that such experience depends upon confidence and a robust attitude to the environment. The response of the children to the activities they were offered supported that belief.