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**Response to Intervention (RtI) at the Early Childhood Level in  
the Naperville Community Unit School District #203**

Early Childhood Education is unique to RtI in that child find activities exist to identify children eligible for special education through district screenings, transitions from Early Intervention services and parent and preschool referrals. Because of child find activities, many of our students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). However, several core elements of RtI are currently being utilized at the EC level in District 203. During the 2005-06 school year, area norms were gathered in collaboration with District 204 on the Individual Growth and Development Indicators of Early Literacy (IGDI's). Data was gathered in the areas of picture naming (vocabulary), alliteration and rhyming skills for Naperville area preschool children. Since that time, data has been collected three times a school year on all early childhood students attending the district's programs (students with IEPs, students who are considered at risk for learning, and community students who pay tuition to attend the preschool). In the District 203 Early Childhood Program, vocabulary data is collected on all children 3 years of age through age 5, alliteration and rhyming data is collected on children 4 and ½ years of age through age 5. The pyramids that are developed from the data provide a visual to parents and staff regarding their student's progress, but also reflect new data entered mid-year as children turn 4 and ½ years of age or as new children enter the program.

The data has been used to make educational decisions in a problem solving approach. In some cases, the curriculum has been modified by explicitly teaching literacy skills or utilizing interventions based on research. The staff also provided repeated readings within the educational day and week. Schedules may have been changed, or rooms reorganized. Progress monitoring has been conducted to examine the effectiveness of the interventions by collecting data three times a year and more frequently for students performing below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile in a certain area.

In one particular instructional class, the schedule was changed, the classroom space was redesigned and groups were created based on identified needs from the data. The students falling below the 25th percentile were being taught using Language for Learning, a research based intervention. The goal was to improve the students' vocabulary within this group. Not only is vocabulary development an identified essential component of early reading, it is vital in all other areas of academic skill success. Student progress was closely monitored utilizing the IGDI's. The following graph utilizing Naperville norms shows one student's progress toward moving closer to the average range of performance.

Illinois Subdivision  
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**<http://illinois-dec.org/>**

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### A Message from the IDEC

**President: Julie Evans**

Greetings to all!! I am excited to be your new IDEC president. I have been working and living the early childhood life for the last 25 years. During this time I have seen the Illinois pre-K at-risk program grow exponentially and evolve into the Pre-school For All initiative. Illinois early childhood special education programs have grown from self-contained center based to more inclusive, blended programming with typically developing peers. Early Intervention has also grown and continues to serve children and families at a time that can be scary and uncertain. I know from my own experience with Early Intervention (both as a provider and a participant) that the developmental therapists are a welcome addition to the family, providing much needed support, reassurance and guidance.

The Division for Early Childhood conference will be held in beautiful downtown Minneapolis next week – hope to see you there. There are a few activities sponsored by the DEC Governmental Relations Committee that should provide plenty of useful information:

*Children’s Advocacy Network (CAN) Governmental Relations Committee No Host Breakfast – Tuesday, October 28, 7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m., Hilton Skywater Restaurant*

*What’s Happening in Washington? - Wednesday October 29, 2008, 9-10:15 a.m.*

*What’s New in the IDEA Part C Regulations? – Wednesday, October 29, 2008, 10:30 to 11:45 a.m.*

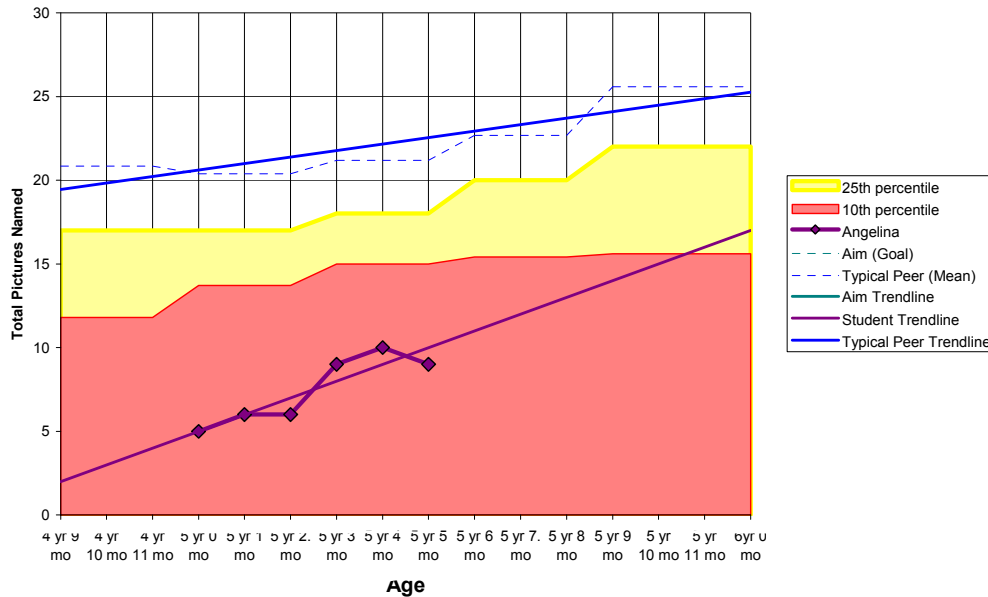
I plan to attend all three activities for the latest information to share with those unable to attend.

Last week I attended the **GOT DATA?** Early Childhood Outcomes conference in Aurora. A big thank you to Dr. Max McGee and the staff at the Illinois Math and Science Academy for hosting the conference. Attendees received loads of information on how to use the data for improving programs for our little ones – we also heard from Nancy Kind and Donna Nylander – two fabulous gals – on what they have done in their programs. Kudos to everyone for sharing what works for them. It was great to hear how we are improving outcomes for children.

I hope to have more news for you next time and I’d also like to give you all A big THANK YOU to everyone for the work you do for children!!

## Rtl and School District #203 (continued from page 1)

Picture Naming Monthly Progress A. S. Instructional Am Class



A different type of intervention was implemented in a “blended” program. In a blended program, 5-6 children have IEPs and 9-10 children from the community pay tuition to attend the district’s EC program. Once a week the schedule was changed, the room was rearranged and the staff explicitly taught early literacy skills such as rhyming, alliteration, alphabet knowledge, and syllable segmentation throughout the school day. Children rotated as small groups through various literacy centers.

The “literacy project” occurred each week for the entire school year. Data was collected three times a year on all the students in the class. The data was compiled and district norms were utilized. The information was put into a pyramid format to provide a visual for staff and parents regarding class progress. Children performing at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and above are represented in green on the pyramids. Children performing at the 11<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> percentile on a particular skill are represented in yellow, and children performing at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile and below are represented in red on the pyramids. The following pyramids utilizing district norms shows the class’ progress on rhyming skills. The pyramids that were developed from the data show student’s progress, but also reflect new data entered mid-year as children turn 4 and ½ years of age or as new children enter the program

## National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI)

Illinois was selected to partner with FPG Child Development Institute's National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) to better prepare early childhood personnel to work in inclusive preschool classrooms. The grant application process represented a cross-agency collaborative effort that worked to identify inclusive practices within the state and opportunities for further development. An inclusive preschool setting educates typically developing children and those with disabilities in the same classroom. Despite the fact that many preschool classrooms have at least one child with a special need, early childhood teachers often have little or no training in educating and caring for children with disabilities, according to a study by FPG researchers published in the *Journal of Early Intervention*. Johnna Darragh, the Illinois Liaison to the NPDCI and a faculty member at Heartland Community College, identifies Illinois participation in the project as "a unique and excit-

ing opportunity to support the development and learning of each and every child—respecting and responding to diversity in ability, home language, and cultural background—within high quality, inclusive early childhood programs." NPDCI will work with Illinois—as well as North Carolina, New Mexico and Virginia—to address policy needs, resource issues and practice concerns. This is the second group of states with whom the project is partnering. In 2007, NPDCI announced partnerships with Georgia, Minnesota, Oregon and Pennsylvania. NPDCI provides technical assistance to help states align existing personnel standards from general and special early childhood education; assists states in identifying and leveraging existing fiscal, human and material resources to develop an integrated, cross-agency State Plan for professional development; and contributes to the evolving knowledge base of effective teaching and intervention practices that support inclusion.

"Ensuring high quality personnel in inclusive programs is daunting for many reasons. Inclusion requires that early childhood practitioners with varying backgrounds, levels of education, and dispositions discover new ways of working together—in partnership with families—to implement effective inclusive practices," said Pamela J. Winton, FPG senior scientist and principal investigator of the project. "However, the majority of early childhood personnel are not adequately prepared to modify teaching methods and curriculum to ensure full participation of children with disabilities." NPDCI is funded by a \$2.5 million, five-year grant from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services of the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, contact Johnna Darragh at [johnna.darragh@heartland.edu](mailto:johnna.darragh@heartland.edu) or visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci"](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci) or visit [www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci).

## Membership Matters! Come and join us!!!

The [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) of the Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#) is a nonprofit organization advocating for individuals who work or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age eight, and their families.

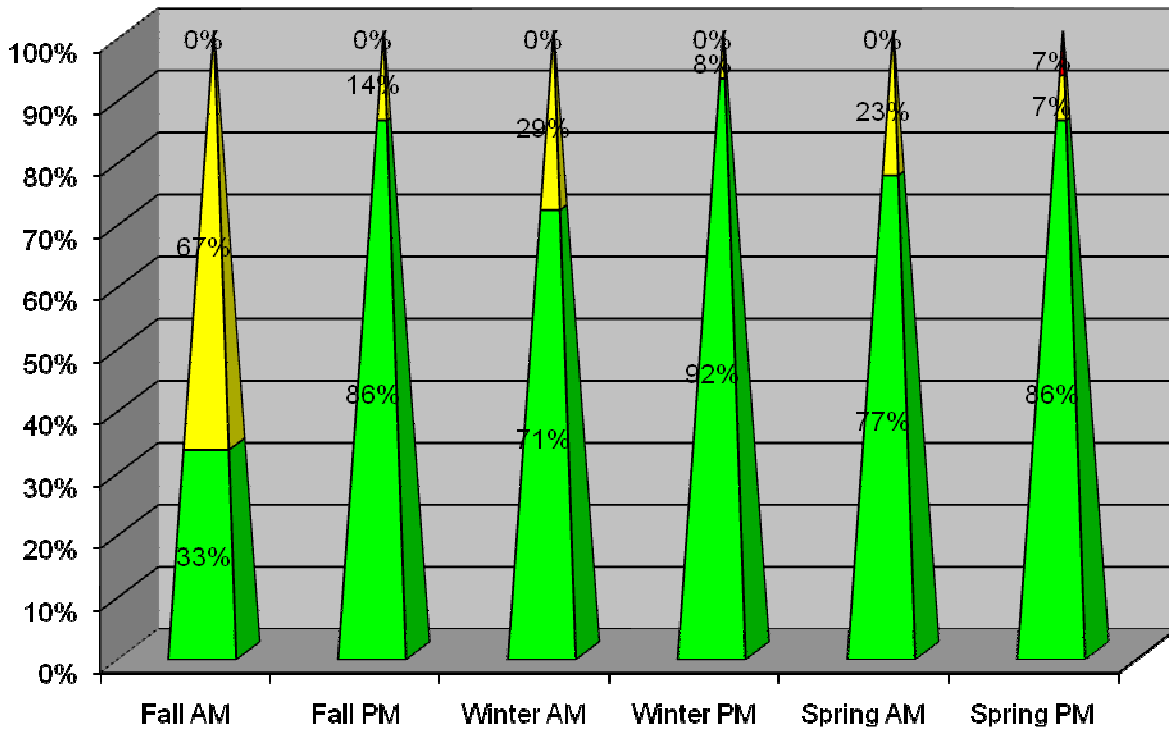
Founded in 1973, DEC, promotes publications and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

Here's a sampling of membership benefits:

- Access to CEC publications such as, Exceptional Children, Teaching Exceptional Children, and CEC Today Plus, DEC Publications such as the Journal of Early Intervention and Young Exceptional Children.
  - Discounts on resources and materials specifically for special educators.
  - Professional development opportunities, such as the CEC Annual Convention and Expo and the DEC Conference.
  - Networking opportunities for professional support.
  - Online Member-Only discussion forums
  - Discounts on services such as Car Insurance, car rentals and professional insurance
- More information about membership can be found at:
- <http://www.decsped.org/membershipbenefits.html>

## RtI and School District #203 (continued from page 2)

IGDI Rhyming



Although child find activities are an important part of early childhood programs within school districts, RtI can still play a large and crucial role. Making educational decisions utilizing data is extremely important for all children, regardless of age and skill levels. The Early Childhood Program in the Naperville Community Unit School District 203 is committed to increasing and expanding their use of the problem solving model to meet the needs of students in all areas including reading, math, social emotional and other areas as the students' needs dictate. To achieve this goal, 203 staff will continue to collaborate with other districts and experts in higher education to insure we are using the most current best practice strategies and progress monitoring tools

*Article Submitted by:* Cynthia Navin O'Meara, NCSP  
 Naperville Community Unit School District 203 Early Childhood School Psychologist



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## Thinking About Advanced Study in Early Childhood Special Education??

Check out the Masters Degree Program in Early Childhood Special Education at **Elmhurst College**. The Masters of ECSE is an innovative, interdisciplinary, collaborative program designed to prepare professionals to meet the increasing needs in the rapidly emerging field of Early Childhood Special Education.

Graduates of this program will possess an understanding of the developmental process, the relationship and impact of disability upon development, and the practices which create effective supportive living and learning environments for young children with special needs. At the heart of this program model is the philosophy of family-centered care. This graduate program has

unique features that embrace our commitment to young children and their families. These include providing opportunities for students to learn directly from families by participating in our "Family Mentor Program". A second feature is a Family Support Specialist who is a parent of a child with special needs on the faculty. This parent co-teaches courses, collaborates with field site placements and supervises students in their work with families. The Masters Program requires 37 semester hours and adheres to the cohort model to fulfill course requirements and strengthen cohesion and student-centered practices.

For Further information contact:

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## Conference Updates!



**Opening Minds:  
The Chicago Early  
Education, Child**

**Care and School-Age Conference - January 22-24, 2009**

**National Association for the Education of Young Children**

**2008 NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo  
November 5-8  
Dallas, Texas**

A list of workshops and trainings can be found on the STARNET website at:

<http://www.wiu.edu/starnet/training/workshops/listing.php>

### Other Resource Websites:

Illinois Bureau of Early Intervention - <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31183>

Hope for All Foundation - <http://www.hopeforallfoundation.org/page/page/2929907.htm>

Hearing and Vision Connections— <http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc/>