



Official Newsletter of the Illinois Subdivision of the Division for
Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

Volume 17, Issue 3

Message from the IDEC President...

Mojdeh Bayat

Inside This Issue:

IDEC Nominations.....	2
JAM Nominations.....	3
Play and VI.....	4
PREP II Project.....	7
RTI Blog.....	8
Autism Film.....	9
Sharing a Vision.....	10
Apps Resources.....	11
ECO Webinars.....	12
Vision and Hearing	13

Find us on the web at

<http://illinois-dec.org/>

The *IDEC Newsletter* is a quarterly publication of the Illinois Division for Early Childhood. Please send inquiries, comments, and article submissions to:

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We are witnessing some exciting changes in early childhood teacher preparation!

These days the institutes of higher education have become very active in building Early Childhood programs that prepare teachers who will be able to successfully support dual language learners and their families. Currently, a number of universities in Illinois-- such as Erikson Institute, DePaul University, University of Illinois, and Northeastern Illinois University just to mention a few -- have begun creating-- or have already completed establishing-- curricula which would enable the Early Childhood pre-service students and in-service professionals to add a LSI or Bilingual endorsement to their teaching certificates.

In January I attended a Forum in which the faculty from a number of universities in Illinois discussed issues related to providing appropriate training for Early Childhood professionals in becoming more competent in working with young dual language learners. I spoke on behalf of young bilingual children with disabilities and their families—issues such as under-identification and

influence of RTI on education of bilingual children with special needs.

As a professional organization, IDEC will strive to be active in providing input regarding various issues related to young children with disabilities and their families, which might otherwise be overlooked. In addition, we strive to provide accurate information regarding professional development opportunities for our members, whether through the Sharing a Vision conference or other statewide events, along with opportunities publicized through our newsletter. We encourage you to read and promote our newsletter and keep your membership active to take advantage of the various opportunities that IDEC strives to provide for its members.

You may want to consider running for an IDEC leadership position or even being on the nominating committee as a new contribution to our statewide group. Please take an active role in whatever way you can!

Sincerely,

Mojdeh Bayat

IDEC Call for Nominations

Looking for a way to get more involved in advocating for young children with disabilities, those at-risk for developing disabilities, and their families? IDEC has leadership positions available in which **YOU can make a difference!**

Currently, there are two positions that need to be filled by election: **Vice-President** and **Secretary**. The elected officers will begin their terms on July 1, 2011. The IDEC Vice-President cycles through three other positions (President-Elect, President, Past President), thus committing to four years of participation. Although this sounds like a long time, it works to the Vice-President's advantage with regard to working with and being mentored by the other officers currently in these positions.

The **Vice-President** gradually assumes more responsibility for leadership rather than being immediately thrust into the position of President. As outlined in the IDEC By-Laws (available on the IDEC website: <http://illinois-dec.org>), specific tasks of the Vice-President include the following:

- (a) serve in the President's place and with his/her authority in the case of absence or inability of the President and President-Elect;
- (b) accept designated responsibilities that will provide training experiences that offer advancement to the office of President-Elect and President; and
- (c) serve as Chair (or Co-Chair) of a committee on the Sharing A Vision (SAV) state conference planning committee, assisting the President-elect as necessary. The Vice-President also serves as the liaison with the Illinois Council for Exceptional Children (ICEC).

The **IDEC Secretary** serves a two-year term. Per the IDEC By-laws the tasks include the following:

- (a) keep records of all proceedings of the annual business meetings, Executive & Governing Board meetings, as well as copies of SAV meeting minutes and other correspondence as necessary for the operation of the organization;
- (b) archive state conference SAV planning committee minutes;
- (c) maintain archives or designate member to store annually; document who and where this will be on a yearly basis; and
- (d) track & maintain documentation related to amendments to the Subdivision Constitution and Bylaws.

If you are interested in one of these positions or know an IDEC member who might be interested, please let me know by Thursday, **March 31, 2011**. You may contact me at 630-375-1118 or at Robin_MillerYoung@ipsd.org.

Nominating Committee Needed for IDEC Elections!

We are soliciting nominations for IDEC members to serve on the “**Nominating Committee**.” This small group of people will help oversee the 2011 elections process. We will correspond via e-mail and possibly telephone regarding development of a slate of candidates to present to the IDEC Governing Board. Then we develop a ballot, send it out to the membership, tally the votes, certify the winners, and announce the results. Members would serve about two hours a month in April and May 2011. If you are interested in securing the next set of leaders in the early childhood field, then please contact Robin Miller Young by **March 15, 2011**.

Robin Miller Young
IDEC Past President
Elections and Nominations Chairperson
630-375-1118
Robin_MillerYoung@ipsd.org

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
Jeanette A. McCollum Award for Service to the Field
Illinois Division for Early Childhood (IDEC)

You are invited to submit the name of an individual for the Jeanette A. McCollum Award for Service to the Field. This award is given to an individual who meets the high standards of professional practice set by Jeanette A. McCollum. Jeanette is a leader in research and personnel preparation in the field of early intervention/early childhood special education, professor emeritus at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and has contributed significantly within Illinois and to the International Division for Early Childhood (IDEC).

Candidates for the Jeanette A. McCollum Award shall meet the following criteria:

1. Be a professional in an agency or an organization in the field of early intervention/early childhood (Birth-8), family member, student or community member, or an area that directly impacts early intervention/early childhood (e.g., government);
2. It is encouraged, but not required, that the candidate be a current member of IDEC;
3. Have made significant contributions on a state, regional, or local level which have improved or will improve the lives of young children with special needs, their families, or those who work on their behalf. Contributions may be in direct services, personnel preparation, leadership, policy development, research, advocacy, or publications and are supportive of the goals of Illinois, IDEC and International DEC.

An award recipient shall receive a plaque or other commemorative award (trophy, statue, etc.), cash reward, have his/her registration to the Sharing A Vision (SAV) conference waived, one-year complimentary membership into IDEC/CEC, and have details of their award published in the Illinois IDEC newsletter.

Please send nominations (letter of support outlining the three criteria above and any additional supporting documentation) to Robin Miller Young at the e-mail or address listed below **by June 15, 2011**. The outcome of this review process will be determined by August 15, 2011 and the award will be presented at the 2011 *Sharing a Vision* Conference in Springfield, IL in September 2011. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Robin Miller Young.

Robin Miller Young, JAM Committee Chairperson
Indian Prairie School District # 204
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DEC 2011: The 27th Annual International Conference
on Young Children with Special Needs & Their Families



November 17-19, 2011
National Harbor, Maryland

<http://dec-sped.org/Conference>

If Play is the Work of Children, Why are Mine Unemployed?

Mindy Ely

Play is an essential part of early child development. Through these interactions, children build skills in the areas of motor, cognition and language. They learn to manage their emotions and interact with peers and adults. Play allows children to develop an intrinsic love for learning through genuine curiosity and problem solving. It is no wonder generation after generation has considered play the work of children.

Yet for children who are visually impaired or blind, research suggests that this skill does not naturally develop as it does in those who are sighted. I spoke to around 80 Illinois Teachers of the Visually Impaired just last month who agreed that the young children with which they work tend to sit alone, bang objects, flip switches or display mannerisms, rather than become involved in sophisticated age-appropriate play. But why? What is it about vision loss that seems to rob children of this essential developmental activity? And, as teachers, what can we do to promote play?

Play is closely related to interaction. It is built on complex personal exchanges. In order to be accepted in a social situation, a child must be able to interact in a socially acceptable manner. At the same time, he must also possess and display play skills that conform to the play situation. For example, if play involves 4-year-old children working together to build a block tower, a newcomer must possess sophisticated block skills in order to join in and contribute. But, if his block skills only include banging or throwing, he will not be welcomed into the group. At the same time, he must be able to follow whatever social rules the children have set in place. Perhaps they each have their own pile of blocks that they are using to add to the growing tower. Perhaps they are taking turns placing pieces on their creation. The newcomer must recognize these unspoken rules and comply. If he doesn't, again, he will not be welcomed into the activity. Children must be able to function with acceptable skills in both play and social interaction.

Play and interaction are closely linked and dependent on one another. Literary review of the research on both topics provides valuable insights for us here. In 1994, Brambling and Troster compared the play skills of 91 children with visual impairment to that of 73 children with typical vision. They found significant delays in the play skills of the children with visual impairments. These delays were more significant in children whose visual impairment was more significant. In addition, the discrepancy between the abilities of those in the two groups widened with age. In a 1989 study, Preisler and Palmer found that children with visual impairments tended to play alone during unstructured play times. They remained in one area of the room and did not engage sighted peers. They tended to mouth and throw toys during these unstructured play times. Hughes, Dote-Kwan, Dolendo (1998) examined solitary play of 13 preschool children. Their findings confirmed those of earlier studies. In their conclusions they suggested that "play-based activities for children who are severely visually impaired may need to be further examined in terms of its effectiveness as an early intervention." Crocker and Orr (1996) conducted a study focusing on the social interactions of children in a preschool classroom. They found that the children who had visually impairment became engaged when a teacher initiated interaction, but their involvement diminished when the teacher was no longer involved. During free play, children with visual impairment typically played alone even when near sighted peers. Their solitary play typically consisted of exploration or repetitive motions, such as opening and shutting the door of a dollhouse. When they did attempt to engage peers, the interactions were short and did not facilitate relationship building. Researchers have pointed to the importance of the teacher in facilitating and modeling peer interaction between the children who are sighted and those who are visually impaired (Crocker and Orr, 1996; Hughes and Dote-Kwan, 1998).

A more recent study seems to have turned a corner in the research of social and play interactions among children. In 2002 Tana D'Allura conducted a project in which preschool teachers of a reverse mainstream classroom were instructed on cooperative learning strategies. This strategy incorporates small group activities in which each member of the group must contribute to complete a task. For example, each member is given an ingredient in a recipe and must do their part in order to complete the objective. These teachers then spent one month providing various cooperative learning activities within the classroom. Peer interactions were observed before the instruction month and again for two months following the instruction. Before the instruction, children with visual impairments spent less than 5% of their free play interacting with peers compared to more than 20% for the children with typical vision. For both groups, most of this time was spent interacting with other children with similar visual abilities. After instruction, the children with visual impairments matched their peers by spending more than 20% of their free time interacting with other children. Also of interest, after instruction, those with and without sight interacted amongst one another without bias.

More research is needed in the areas of play and social interaction. But, several logical conclusions can be drawn from the information that we have available. First, child development research shows the importance of play and social skills in the early years. These skills are foundational to all subsequent learning. Second, teacher interaction and modeling is essential. Children with visual impairments must be given skills to know how to play and interact. Finally, we need to foster a view that supports those with visual impairments as contributing members of the classroom community. We can do this in several ways.

First, Teachers of the Visually Impaired need to become aware of the research and respond accordingly. We typically spend a great deal of time with infants and toddlers working on reaching, exploring, object permanence, literacy, and cause and effect. When the preschool years come, we typically jump to academics focusing heavily on Braille reading, technology, and math skills. But, when we do this, we have missed the necessary developmental skills of play and socialization. In addition, we tend to go into the classroom during the structured points of the day to provide the classroom teacher with adaptations. But, the research (Hughes and Dote-Kwan, 1998; Crocker and Orr, 1996) shows that this is the point in the day when the child with the visual impairment is already engaged. We need to spend less time adapting and more time instructing/modeling play skills in the various centers in the room. Children with visual impairments cannot easily look around and learn by copying what the other children are doing. We must intentionally teach the children how to play with blocks, teach them how to play in the dramatic play area, and so on. For example, if the dramatic play area is a doctor's office for the week, we can role-play with the child helping him understand how to participate in dramatic play. This modeling will also help the other children as they join the fun in this teacher-facilitated peer interaction.

Secondly, we need to look at the environment. Can our kids move easily from place to place? Do they know what toys are available? Can they find toys to play with? Do they know where the toys are? We need to spend ample time helping our students engage with items within the classroom environment. At the same time, we are scaffolding their play skills by teaching them how to play with the toys. Again, free play seems the most appropriate time to provide this instruction. As we do this, opportunities to facilitate peer interaction will happen naturally. Providing this instruction during free play allows children to practice choice making, classroom movement, and peer interaction in real classroom situations.

Finally, we need to make sure interactions are of high quality. Our students need to be learning and exploring just like other students. We don't want our children with visual impairments being

helped throughout every task. For most classrooms, this will require that we shift community expectations from CAN'T to CAN. Very often when we see a child with a disability we immediately put limitations on what they can do. Thankfully our students continually remind us just how much further they can go! I once was preparing to introduce one of my young students to a new boy in the classroom. My student had light perception, but considered herself to be blind. I was attempting to explain that the new student was totally blind and could not even see light. As she began to understand what total blindness meant she suddenly became concerned and asked how he could possibly know whether it was day or night. As we pondered her thought, she happily came to a conclusion, "I know," she exclaimed, "he can hear the birds in the morning and the crickets at night!" She turned a CAN'T into a CAN. The whole classroom community, even the student himself, needs that CAN spirit. It CAN be done. And if the "how" is not obvious, we can work together to figure it out. Giving our kids opportunities to do age-appropriate activities on their own is the only way they will grow and learn.

Research shows us that young children need to interact in play situations (Almon 2010; Copple and Bredekamp, 2009; Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff, 2003). Free play is their key to learning about their world and people in it. But research also shows that most children with visual impairments struggle to engage during unstructured free time. Teachers for the Visually Impaired should target these times to teach play skills while facilitating peer interactions. Making sure our children understand "how" to play in each center is essential. Taking time to show them what is available, as well as where those items are located will go a long way in helping to make play a successful developmental experience. In addition we need to promote an attitude that shows those students with visual impairments are capable, contributing members of the classroom community.

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Mindy Ely is an Early Childhood Resource Specialist for STARNET Regions I and III and former Teacher



*Interested in getting paid
while earning your master's degree?*

***Preparing Relationship-based Early Intervention &
Early Childhood Special Education Personnel:
PREP II Project***

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been awarded federal funding (PREP II Project) to support students interested in earning a **master's degree**, with an emphasis on working with young children, ages birth to six, with disabilities and their families. This is a 2 year full-time program of study on the Champaign-Urbana campus. There are no online courses at the present time.

Interested individuals should apply to the graduate program in the Department of Special Education.

Deadline for receipt of admission applications:

April 1, 2011 for enrollment beginning Summer or Fall 2011 semesters

For more information about the application process and admission deadlines, visit: <http://education.illinois.edu/sped/AdmissionsMasters.html>. Applicants should indicate their interest in the PREP II project in the goal statement component of the application materials.

If accepted into the program, funding consists of a traineeship stipend, a tuition waiver, and waiver of some fees. Funding is limited and awarded on a competitive basis. Attached to this funding is a service obligation to be fulfilled after completion of the degree.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Mary-alayne Hughes, Project Director, mahughes@illinois.edu

New Blog: Response to Intervention (RtI) in Early Childhood (EC) and Preschool Settings!

What is Response to Intervention (RtI) and what might it look like in early childhood programs? How do you ensure that children receive differentiated instruction so that each child's unique learning needs are met? What decision-making processes should classroom and program teams use to ensure that evidence-based assessment, curricular, and instructional tools are employed in making these decisions? What are the implications of the RtI movement for teacher training and certification?

Please join the RtI Action Network's blog "Response to Intervention (RtI) in Early Childhood (EC) and Preschool Settings" (<http://www.rtinetwork.org/rti-blog>) to contribute to discussions of these issues. The first entry (November 2010) described the four objectives of the blog which include (1) talking about emerging principles for creating, developing, implementing and evaluating RtI in EC/Preschool settings, (2) sharing "stories from the field" so we can learn from each other's practical experiences, (3) discussing issues that impact "scaling up" of our practices, and (4) sharing resources. The second entry (January 2011) outlined six "Big Ideas" that characterize RtI in EC/Preschool settings. Additional blog postings are being developed by those in the field, including practitioners and program leaders, as well as researchers, policy makers, trainers, and others with interest and experience working within high quality EC/ECSE programs and/or RtI frameworks. These additional entries will be posted on the blog about once a month to stimulate additional conversations.

We are striving to have a rich dialogue of ideas to serve as an additional resource beyond the current conferences, webinars, classes, and published articles to help one another determine how to put this systems change initiative into place. Please join this new opportunity to refine how we meet young children's educational needs!

Robin Miller Young, Ed.D.
RtI in EC/Preschool Blog Facilitator
Immediate Past President, IDEC

GRADUATE PROGRAMS AT ELMHURST



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Film Project on Autism



A Special Educator Brings Triumphs of the Special Needs Community to the Public

The film, *NightLights*, chronicles the life of one dedicated sister as she attempts to be the sole caregiver for her twin brother, a loving young man who is severely affected by autism. The film is being made by *Play On Productions*, founded by special education teacher, David Midell, who wanted to help bring the stories and triumphs of the special needs community to a mainstream audience.

Autism currently affects 1.5 million American individuals, and by extension, American families. Despite its prevalence in our communities and culture, autism is rarely understood and often misrepresented by the media. This is our moment to change this narrative bringing an incredible community of everyday heroes the support that they deserve.

The film is funded through a grassroots movement that includes sponsorship from the Autism Society of Illinois, the Anixter Center, and hundreds of patrons across the country. The film which is sponsored by a 501 (c)(3)—non-profit company, has currently earned about 50% of the final budget. **Donations are still being accepted.** More information could be found at the website below.

Producer : *Play On Productions*

www.playonproductions.net

(847) 977-6220

Thlumiere@gmail.com

Submitted by: Mojdeh Bayat, IDEC President



Eleventh National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute

May 16-18, 2011

The William and Ida Friday Center
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Sponsored by Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

For more information,,visit the website:

www.nectac.org/inclusioninstitute/



*Celebrating
20 Years!*

Save the Date!

Sharing a Vision Conference: Children, Families and Professionals Together

**September 26-28, 2011
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield, IL**

Keynotes: LeDerick Horne: Poet, playwright, motivational speaker, advocate
"Beyond Classification"
John Foppe: Author and owner of international training company
"Within Reach"

Lunch for both days is now included in the registration fee.
For all fee options, please visit the conference website:

<http://sharingavision.org/>



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ECE ESL/BBE Endorsement

The Early Childhood Bilingual/ESL Endorsement is designed to enhance early childhood educators' knowledge of the instructional strategies and curricula to suit the needs of young English Language Learners and their families. Course content will help participants learn how to assess and provide appropriate instruction and program to enhance the development and promote learning for young learners and their families.



Courses required for the endorsement:

BBE 408: Bilingual Early Childhood Development Theoretical Foundations
BBE 409: English as a Second Language Instructional Foundations in Early Childhood Settings
Thurs 6-9 LOOP *
T&L 440: Early Childhood Education Cross-Cultural Studies
T&L 441: Early Childhood Methods and Materials for English Language Learners
T&L 442: Early Literacy Development and Second Language Acquisition
T&L 443: Assessing Young Bilingual/ESL Learners
Mon 6-9 LOOP*
T&L 444: Early Childhood Bilingual/ESL Practicum

For the Bilingual Endorsement:
Language Oral and Written Exams
are required.

*These courses are offered Spring 2011

For more information contact:

Dr. Gayle Mindes, 773-325-7769, gmindes@depaul.edu
Nancy Hashimoto, 773-325-4325, nhashimo@depaul.edu

To apply to the program contact:

Graduate Admissions, 773-325-4405, edgradadmissions@depaul.edu



Apps for Children and Adults

An increasing number of new software programs or apps are released daily for the iPad, iPod Touch, and iPhone. Some of these apps are free, while others are available for a small charge. As with any software, especially those programs to be used with young children, each app should be carefully evaluated for developmental appropriateness of content. New websites are appearing which offer information on apps. Two websites which contain a compilation of apps for all ages include:

Apps for Education by Carolann Comier - apps are divided into 21 categories which include art, assessment tools, assistive technology and accessibility, books, music, organization, reading, science, writing, and sign language. The name of the app and a brief description are provided. There are also recommended websites for related iPad and accessibility products.

<http://www.connsensebulletin.com/2011/01/apps-for-education-update/>

Teaching Learners with Multiple Special Needs - a variety of special education apps with screen shots of the program and links to further information

<http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/search/label/iPod%20app>



iTunes now has a **Special Education** section on their Apps Store which includes apps for communication, hearing, language development, literacy and learning, and organization.

Future issues of the *IDEC Newsletter* will include further information on specific apps and iPad accessories for children with disabilities.



2011 Assistive Technology Resources - Free CD-ROM!

The Family Center on Technology and Disability has just released its updated version of the AT Resources CD-ROM. The product contains AT-related articles, discussion transcripts, training materials, guides, and links to free online materials. Free single copies and bulk shipments can be requested at their website:

http://www.fctd.info/show/order_form

Using Outcome Data for Program Improvement: Webinar Series by the ECO Center

The Early Childhood Outcomes Center is sponsoring a series of webinars related to using data for program improvement. The webinars will focus on looking for patterns in the data, figuring out what the data is telling us about programs, and determining the action steps needed to improve programs. The series will present a number of tools developed by federally funded TA providers to help states and local programs use their data. Examples of these tools will be presented along with examples from programs on how they are used to plan for improvement. All webinars are scheduled from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. The first two webinars took place February 22nd and March 8th. The two remaining are scheduled for Spring.

Using Outcomes Data for Program Improvement - Kathy Hebbeler and Cornelia Taylor (ECO) - April 12, 2011 - 4:00-5:00 p.m. Eastern

Data-based Decision Making: Tools for Improving Practice - Anne Lucas (RRCP) and Sharon Walsh (DAC) - May 10, 2011 - 4:00-5:00 p.m. Eastern



For further information, see ECO website, www.the-eco-center.org

Follow the Progress on RTI Joint Position Statement

The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Head Start Association (NHSA) are working together to develop a joint position statement on Response to Intervention in early childhood. The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NCPDI) is helping to facilitate the process. They are scheduled to begin soliciting national input on the draft position statement between April and July 2011 with the final version ready for distribution by the end of December 2011. You can see the full schedule and plan at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute website,

<http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/RTI-EC?enews=>

The site also has a pdf of Resources on Response to Intervention, listing of the national experts and the joint work group (which includes Donna Nylander), meeting summaries, and the Listening Session summary.

5th Annual Family Conference:

Resources and Inspiration for Adult Family Members and Caregivers of Children with Disabilities

March 26, 2011 - Peoria, IL

For information and registration, see www.starnet.org

Upcoming Events for Families of Children with Vision or Hearing Impairments

Parent-Infant Opening Doors Conference

June 2 - June 4, 2011

Held in Jacksonville and the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired

Free event including conference, meals, and lodging.

For parents and their children aged 0-5

Registration and Information available at www.isvi.net

Northern Illinois Conference for Parents of Children with Vision Loss

April 30, 2011

Held in Rockford at the Center for Sight and Hearing

Conference for parents with children aged 0-21.

Registration and information available at www.isvi.net/Workshops&Seminars.htm

Southern Illinois Conference for Parents of Children with Vision Loss

April 9, 2011

Held in Mt Vernon at the Mt. Vernon Primary Center

Conference for parents with children aged 0-21.

Registration and information available at www.isvi.net/Workshops&Seminars.htm

Parent Cafe - for families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing

April 2, 2011

Five locations throughout Illinois

Sponsored by Illinois Service Resource Center

Registration and information is available at www.isrc.us

Deaf Learners and Successful Cognitive Achievement

April 18, 2011 - web conference, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Eastern time

Three distinguished experts on deaf education will focus on K-12

Registration and information is available at www.isrc.us

Looking for Videos for Workshops or Courses?

Camille Catlett recently posted information in her weekly *Natural Resources* message about **free videos** which are available from the Colorado Department of Education's Results Matter Program. The Program's Video Library has more than 20 new videos which illustrate children participating in typical activities. These videos can be used by college students or early childhood teachers to practice skills in observation, documentation, and assessment. The videos can be viewed online or downloaded onto a computer for later viewing.



<http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/RMVideoSeries.htm>