

Arts at the Heart of Childhood Services Week

Making friends, exploring your imagination, learning to concentrate and relax, having fun and developing motor skills, confidence and talent are just some of the extensive ways in which the arts foster early childhood development.

For these reasons and more, 'Arts at the Heart' is the theme of this year's Childhood Services Week 2021, from 24th May to 29th May next.

Recognising and supporting the work of the early childhood and school-age care sector on the island of Ireland, Childhood Services Week is organised by National Childhood Network (NCN) in conjunction with other childcare-focussed agencies.

The 32-county cross-border initiative will this year promote the diverse ways to encourage children to explore, play and learn through experiential engagement in the arts, according to Denise McCormilla, CEO of the NCN.

"Early Childhood and School Age services right across Ireland are invited to hold their own Festival of the Arts, providing lots of opportunities for children to engage in different arts experiences to enrich their learning and support their holistic development".

There is an informative booklet on the NCN website, free to download, on creative play ideas for young children that will keep them happy and busy all summer long.

Produced by Barnardos and the NCN, and sponsored by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, it details arts experiences for young children that are joyful, spontaneous and creative. There are practical projects to undertake and guidance for parents and carers on how children learn through art and play.

Arts experiences with malleable materials, junk art, drawing and painting, storytelling and puppetry, music, dance and movement are among the activities the booklet explores.

https://www.ncn.ie/images/PDFs/Arts_Experiences_for_Young_Children.pdf

For early childhood and after-school professionals, or others interested in the arts for children agenda, there is a series of arts-based webinars, currently running each evening throughout May until 27th. Delivered by professionals in creative learning and development, these are designed to enthuse and inspire early childhood and after-school professionals to provide a wide range of experiential arts opportunities children can enjoy during Childhood Services Week and beyond.

Themes include storytelling, light and creativity, painting and mark-making, sensory play with malleable materials, fundamental movement, music, song and dance, green play, creative play with sand, water and other natural materials, and establishing creative spaces, all with the aim of allowing children to make choices, use their imagination, collaborate, create and take risks.

Keynote Address by International Expert in Social and Emotional Education

Christopher Clouder, an internationally renowned author, teacher and campaigner on creativity and innovation in social and emotional education, will deliver the keynote webinar address of Childhood Services Week.

Early-childhood and school-age professionals and other stakeholders working with the sector are encouraged to register for Christopher 's 'Arts at the Heart' webinar to encourage the

provision of enriching arts experiences for children. on Thursday May 27th at 7.00pm, where he will expand on his beliefs that creativity is an essential aspect of human nature and the foundation of our capacity to communicate.

It is crucial that parents and everyone working with young children understand creativity, in order to help the children, preserve and develop their own natural creativity, he says.

“Creativity is where imagination and reality meet, and it is the gate to both our emotions and understanding. It should be one of our most of prized attributes and when we are awake to our creativity we can all better serve our children, our societies, and our globe”.

Personalities from the world of the arts, including Peter Coonan of TV’s Love/Hate fame, are behind this year’s ‘Arts at the Heart’ drive for Childhood Services Week.

The importance of the arts for children cannot be underestimated he says.

“Building confidence, exploring imagination, trying out something new and meeting new people are just some of the skills we see young people develop via the arts, which, along with the sheer joy of creativity, are important life lessons”, the actor says.

Using #ChildhoodArts, early childhood and school age services are invited to share images of children engaged in different forms of art during the week.

The NCN website www.ncn.ie has lots more information about the webinar programme and arts themes for Childhood Services Week

#childhoodarts #CSW21

Organisations supporting NCN in Childhood Services Week 2021 include Barnardos, Early Years, the organisation for young children, Childminding Ireland, the Northern Ireland Childminding Association, the Association of Childhood Professionals, Crann Support Group, National Community Childcare Forum, Blathu Steiner Early Childhood Association, Early Childhood Ireland, Conradh na Gaeilge, Gaeloideachas, Play Board NI, Sleepy Hollow Group NI, Federation of Early Childhood Providers, Seas Suas, Men in Childcare, Childminding Ireland, Northern Ireland Childminding Association, Early Childhood Ireland, Child Paths and ReCreate Ireland.

National Childhood Network (NCN)

With a mission of ‘Supporting Development of Quality Childhood Services’, the National Childhood Network works with people in a variety of roles within the Early Childhood and School-Age Childcare sector. The organisation aims to support the achievement of national quality standards in all areas of service delivery including governance, facility management, and holistic play-based learning that enhances children’s health, well-being, learning and development.