An Independent Evaluation of the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme

Centre for Effective Education, Queen’s University Belfast
National Children’s Bureau (Northern Ireland)
Stranmillis University College
Methodology

• Cluster randomised controlled trial (led by Centre for Effective Education)
  – 1,181 children aged 3-4 years in 74 settings
  – 868 parents
  – 232 practitioners

• Four indepth qualitative case studies (led by NCB and Stranmillis University College)
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Methodology

Deliver the Media Initiative for Children

- October 2008
- June 2009
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Methodology

Pre-tests → Deliver the Media Initiative for Children → Post-tests

Measure change before and after regarding children’s:
- Socio-emotional development
- Cultural awareness
- Inclusive behaviour
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Methodology

- Pre-tests
- Deliver the Media Initiative for Children
- Post-tests
- Pre-tests
- Continue with normal activities
- Post-tests

Need for a comparison or control group
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Methodology

74 settings randomly allocated

Pre-tests → Deliver the Media Initiative for Children → Post-tests

Pre-tests → Continue with normal activities → Post-tests

Need to randomly allocate children or settings
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Methodology

74 settings randomly allocated

Pre-tests → Deliver the Media Initiative for Children → Post-tests

Pre-tests → Continue with normal activities → Post-tests

The big question: “have the Media Initiative children made more gains than those in control group?”
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Findings – Children (1)

Key findings (with effect sizes):

- Increased socio-emotional development (+.34 to +.61)
- Increased cultural awareness (+.38 to +.72)
- Increased desire to join in with cultural activities (+.17 to +.27) although no evidence found of changes in children’s willingness to be inclusive of others
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Findings – Children (2)

• Effects found are those above and beyond the effects associated with normal preschool provision

• Effects were the same regardless of the characteristics of the children

• Effects were the same regardless of the characteristics of the settings delivering the Media Initiative
Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial: Findings – Practitioners and Parents

• Some potentially encouraging signs found re:
  – increase in awareness of the need to do diversity work with young children
  – Increased confidence in their own ability to do this

• However, for methodological reasons, none of these encouraging signs can be trusted without further research
Qualitative Case Studies: Perspectives of Key Stakeholders

• **Practitioners** valued the training, ongoing specialist support, curriculum and resources; felt the programme impacted positively on their own skills and confidence

• **Parents** welcomed the programme; felt it presented an important opportunity for their children to learn about diversity and develop respect for others

• **Children** were observed to find the resources and activities appealing; activities provided an important safe space for them to explore diversity issues
Qualitative Case Studies: Key Drivers of Successful Implementation

- Training for practitioners
- Ongoing advice and support from Early Years Specialists
- Variety and quality of resources and their integration across all elements of the setting’s activities
- Working effectively with parents
- Effective and committed leadership within settings
Conclusions

• The Media Initiative is an effective programme that represents added value to existing provision
• The Media Initiative is a robust programme
• The Media Initiative is well received among key stakeholders
• Successful implementation of the Media Initiative depends upon a number of key drivers
Recommendations

The report makes 18 recommendations including:

• Consider expanding the Media Initiative for younger (2-3 year old) and older (5-7 year old) children

• Use existing resources to demonstrate and model out inclusive behaviours more explicitly for children

• Government needs to recognise and address issues of diversity and inclusion in early childhood
Further Details

• Full versions of the reports on the cluster randomised controlled trial and the qualitative case studies can be downloaded, respectively, from:
  – www.qub.ac.uk/cee
  – www.ncb.org.uk/resources

• Details of the above links can also be found in the Executive Summary