

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Ignition - Primary Space Education (1)

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USING PUPPETS, SKYPE AND SPACE TO INTRODUCE STEM IN RAINBOW HOUSE
EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE FACILITY, IN JOBSTOWN, IRELAND

Abstract

This project aimed to support early years educators and parents to engage children in enriching learning opportunities, by enhancing the existing curriculum through the provision of STEM activities. Much research has shown that high quality early years programmes for young children living in disadvantaged areas will raise their intellectual and social development and contributes to school success and economic performance. Rainbow House Educational Childcare Centre opened in 1999 and has provided high quality education and care to children from Tallaght West, and surrounding areas. An Cosán Fledglings early years services has been providing education and care since 2008. Rainbow House offers high quality childcare to people of Tallaght West to enable them to avail of education and training, and provides childcare for children with special needs, who have been referred from Tusla, Child and Family Agency. An Cosán has been working in partnership with Tusla and previously with the Health Service Executive and the Eastern Health Board, by offering early year places to children whose families are experiencing challenges, either themselves or because of their child's additional needs.

Funded by Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family agency, one of the aims of this project was to support early years educators to make a significant contribution to the development of the children and families they work with to ensure better outcomes for children. In the development of their current strategic plan, An Cosán recognised the need to enhance the curriculum on offer in our early years provision.

This project was a pilot project to contribute to the provision of a high quality early years programme to involve parents/carers in their young child's education, through fun, play-based STEM activities. The project also aimed to have long term effects on the children's development by developing a wide range of skills and interests and fostering a love of learning which will remain with the child.

Working closely with Rainbow House team of leaders and facilitators, Niamh Shaw and Anne Genockey designed a pilot study and rolled out a series of 6 space-themed workshops to a test group of early learners aged 2-6 year with experiments, activities and puppetry. A STEM curriculum, for early years educators. Due to the success of the pilot project, further funding is being sought to roll out the oil study across the wider Rainbow House facility.