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Educators Encouraged to Follow Best Practices for High-Quality Pre-K

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Renowned Children's Book Authors and Early Education Experts Recommend Investigative Learning

EVANSTON, Ill., Jan. 18 /PRNewswire/ -- As the universal pre-K debate in California continues, a main focus will be on the growing body of scientific evidence stating that high-quality early education has a significant, positive impact. In fact, without adequate support, children can fall behind in their academic and social skills before they even reach kindergarten, and they are unlikely to close the gap over time. So many teachers and parents are left to wonder what constitutes high-quality early education.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20051207/RLPUB>)

Early childhood experts and children's book authors, Joellyn Cicciarelli and Beth Alley Wise, suggest educators can provide young children with a balanced, integrated curriculum that addresses all areas of children's development through investigative learning. This approach magnifies children's desire to learn and engages their natural curiosity while covering language, literacy, math, science, social studies, creative arts, physical health, social-emotional development, and technology skills. This is the premise behind the new prekindergarten learning system, The InvestiGator Club, that Cicciarelli and Wise developed for Robert-Leslie Publishing, a developer of early childhood education products for teachers, parents and children. Educators and state officials can preview The InvestiGator Club at the California Head Start Association Educational Conference in Sacramento, Calif. on Jan. 18-20, 2006.

Investigations initiated by the teacher or child can open the door for stimulating, inquiry-based learning in a variety of subjects. Cicciarelli and Wise emphasize that an integrated curriculum is most effective when educators follow these five best practice strategies:

- Address the whole child. Move beyond the basic preschool curriculum to include science experimentation, mathematical reasoning and problem solving, classical music, fine art and other non-traditional subjects, as well as incorporate activities and discussions that foster healthy social and emotional development.
- Peak children's curiosity. Approach instruction and activities in novel ways to engage children's diverse learning styles and abilities, and to allow them the opportunity to freely explore the world around them.
- Engage all the senses. Use musical or visual cues instead of spoken commands when transitioning, such as sitting down for circle time, or play a variation of the game "I Spy" that encompass all the senses, describing an object's smell, taste, sound and feel.
- Use age-appropriate assessments. Evaluations should be based on the frequency that a skill or subject is addressed and observations of children's engagement and progress, rather than on measuring children's success or failure in meeting preset requirements.
- Expose children to a language-rich environment. While reading, ask them to predict what will happen next in the story and engage them in discussion of the characters, setting and plot. Introduce them to written and oral language in a variety of formats such as letting them browse through books and make up their own stories based on pictures,

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putting on a puppet play or singing songs to help them acquire emerging language and literacy skills.

These tips along with an integrated curriculum touch on all of the Head Start domains for positive child outcomes.

The InvestiGator Club is now available for purchase, and will be ready for classroom use in the 2006-2007 school year. The cost of the system for one classroom is \$2,600. For more information, visit <http://www.investigatorclub.com> or phone 1-888-345-PREK.

About The InvestiGator Club

The InvestiGator Club is a comprehensive, fully integrated learning system for children ages 3-5. The system provides explicit, scaffolded instruction in critical school readiness areas, such as literacy and math. It also offers teachers a menu of choices that enables them to customize lesson plans to meet individual teaching styles, classroom environments and children's needs. The InvestiGator Club is made up of a colorful, endearing cast of animal characters that guide children through a series of investigations and encourage them to conduct experiments, build structures, sing and dance, engage in dramatic play, appreciate fine art and more. All children receive membership in the Club along with their parents, providing them access to a members-only area of the Club's interactive website: <http://www.investigatorclub.com>.

About Robert-Leslie Publishing

Robert-Leslie Publishing, based in Evanston, Ill., is dedicated exclusively to early childhood education. Its mission is to provide all young children with the experiences and skills they need to be successful learners. Judi and James Coffey, early childhood advocates, founded the company in March 2005 based on the principle that the early years are the most important time to set the foundation for success in school. Robert-Leslie focuses on all early childhood developmental areas through diverse, comprehensive curriculum, teacher support, family involvement, and professional development. The InvestiGator Club(TM), the company's flagship product, is a fully integrated learning system for children ages 3-5. Flapboards(TM) are the company's innovative new teaching tool that use magnetic lift-the-flap storyboards and flap fillers to allow for numerous story possibilities, to spark curiosity and to build problem-solving skills. For more information, visit <http://www.investigatorclub.com> or phone 847-733-8100.

The InvestiGator Club and Flapboards are trademarks of Robert-Leslie Publishing.

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