

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### STATEWIDE CONFERENCE COMES TO SYRACUSE

**Syracuse, New York,** October 28, 2008 – This year's annual NYS Primary Project Conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Carrier Circle in East Syracuse. Over 120 are expected to attend to learn more about the role of imaginative play in working with young children.

Primary Project is a research-based program developed at Children's Institute, a national not-for-profit organization based in Rochester, NY. "Primary Project is a prevention program with a proven track record that addresses school adjustment difficulties in the earliest grades. This program has helped over one million children in over 2,100 schools across the United States," said Dirk Hightower, executive director of Children's Institute. Children in kindergarten through 3rd grade who show emerging school adjustment difficulties are paired with a trained and clinically supervised child associate who engages in child-directed, expressive play. The child associate builds a trusting relationship and reinforces the child's strengths. Primary Project can be found in over 17 states, as far away as Hawaii.

"There are over 180 Primary Project Programs in New York State. This year, we wanted to make our annual conference more accessible to program staff and administrators throughout the state," said conference organizer, Lynn Smith, who also oversees coordination of Primary Project in NYS. "We are thrilled to be partnering with the Syracuse City School District, which has 13 Primary Project Programs for their students."

This year's conference theme is imaginative play and features keynote speaker Matthew Bernier, MCAT, ATR-BC. Mr. Bernier is a registered, board-certified art therapist. He has been a full-time faculty member in the Graduate Art Therapy Program at Eastern Virginia Medical School since 1990 and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

The mission of Children's Institute is to strengthen children's social and emotional health. Through sound research and evaluation, we develop and promote effective prevention and early intervention programs, materials and best practices for children, families, schools and communities. Staff members come from a variety of disciplines including psychology, economics, pediatrics, education and early education, social work, business, public policy and evaluation.

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children's  
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